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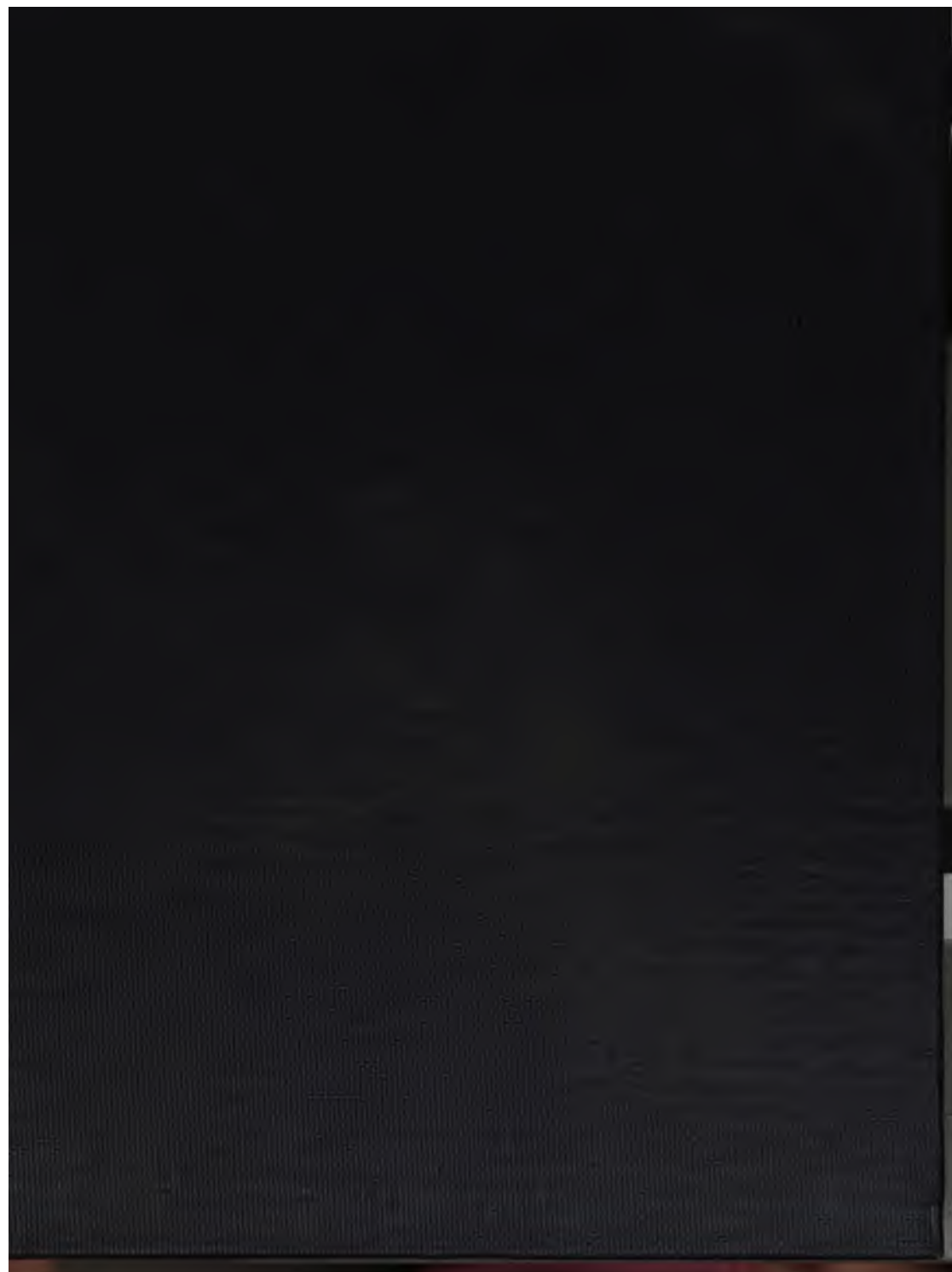
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THE OLD MINISTER OF BRAMPTON.

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# BRAMPTON SKETCHES

*OLD-TIME NEW ENGLAND LIFE*

BY  
MARY B. CLAFLIN

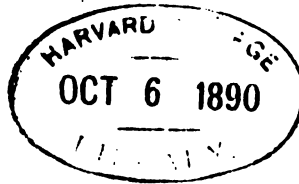
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NEW YORK  
THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.  
46 EAST FOURTEENTH STREET (UNION SQUARE)

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TO THE MEMORY OF  
**My Grandfather,**  
THE GOOD DOCTOR OF BRAMPTON.



## PREFATORY NOTE.

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RUFUS CHOATE once said, "I could wish to see a genius like Walter Scott, or a thousand such as he, undertake to illustrate the early life of New England."

Though I have not the remotest claim to genius, I have a vivid remembrance of the conversation, the stories, and the appearance of the elderly people of my own village in my youth, and of what then remained, in manners and customs, of the ways of early times. These brief sketches are faithful records of such memories, transcripts, as literal as they are simple, of what I thus learned of the life of a New England village eighty years ago.

M. B. C.





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# BRAMPTON SKETCHES.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE MANOR-HOUSE.

IN early New England days the life of the interior villages was quite different from that of the coast towns. Foreign news, books, changes of fashion, and all the influences of commerce came first to the shore, and, with the slow and infrequent communication of the time, only gradually found their way back to the hills. The seaboard community was thus, in many ways, *unlike* a rural neighborhood, where people kept their primitive customs and lived in comparative isolation.

The meeting-house of Brampton stood on a barren expanse of elevated pasture land, the highest hill between Wachusett and the sea, and about it were clustered the modest houses

and outlying farms that made up the village and the town. The tops of its pine-trees could be discerned thirty miles distant; Wachusett and Monadnock were plainly visible as you looked from its windows to the western horizon, and rivers took their rise in its innumerable springs.

∠ The settlement of Brampton owed its beginning to a bequest of money made by an English gentleman to Harvard College. This money was invested in 1710, in lands on this elevated ridge, and the territory thus purchased was named for the donor, and leased to tenants for one penny an acre. The rents were paid until the people, who were very poor, became dissatisfied and delinquent in their payments, and in the year 1732 it was decided in the General Court, that ten thousand dollars should be drawn from the State treasury in full settlement, satisfaction, and discharge of rents due, and that the corporation of Harvard College should surrender to those who had occupied them all right and title to these lands. When

the land was given, a certain portion was allotted for the use of the minister, it having been purchased, so it was denominated in the deed, "for upholding and propagating the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ in New England." Another portion was set apart for school purposes.

About 1745, the Rev. Roger Price, who had been for some years rector of King's Chapel, Boston, and had become disaffected with his people, took up a large tract of land and settled in Brampton, drawn thither, probably, by its favorable position. Some years later, a titled English gentleman of wealth and culture, who was a collector of revenues in Boston, and a friend of the rector, was induced by him to come to Brampton and purchase land for a country home, where he could spend his time in hunting and fishing, in cultivating his grounds, and in entertaining his political friends. He chose the western slope of a hill called Magunco,—place of great trees,—the same hill where the Indians had lighted their

camp-fires, and Eliot had preached the gospel to them, a century before ; he erected a commodious manor-house in the midst of a chestnut forest ; planted orchards, built granaries, and embellished his gardens with ornamental trees imported from England.

The baronet was only twenty-four years of age when he purchased "Magunco." He was a lineal descendant of Oliver Cromwell, a friend and associate of Horace Walpole and Henry Fielding, and of the Earl of Chesterfield, whom he was said to have resembled both in manners and person. Allied to one of the first families in England, accustomed to the gayeties of London, and received and flattered by the ladies and gentlemen who occupied the court end of Boston, he found the amusements of the small colonial town somewhat circumscribed, and welcomed anything which would tend to break up the monotony and afford a new sensation.

Not long after his arrival in Boston, he had occasion to visit the neighboring town of

Marblehead, which had recently become a port of entry, to transact business pertaining to the revenues. While he was refreshing himself in the only tavern the village afforded, his attention was arrested by a young girl who was engaged in scrubbing the floor. She was destitute of shoes and stockings, and was very scantily clad. He called her from her scrubbing, and, entering into conversation with her, he soon perceived that her wit was equal to the beauty which had attracted him. He gave her a crown to buy shoes and stockings, and offered a kiss, which she blushing took with maidenly modesty. When he returned to Boston, neither official duties, nor the gay society, where were introduced all the manners and customs of court life in the mother country, where were kept up all the distinctions of family and title, where were liveried servants and armorial bearings, — neither courtly circumstance nor aristocratic pride could divert his mind from the beautiful little barmaid whom he had left on her knees, scrubbing the



rough floor in the small suburban village of Marblehead. His mind constantly turned in that direction, and he soon found occasion to visit a second time the little port of entry.

On this second visit he approached the parents of the rustic barmaid, and asked permission to take her to Boston to educate her. His request was granted by the simple country folk, who saw for their child only an opportunity to better her condition, and were wholly ignorant of the impropriety of trusting her to the care of a stranger. Our courtly young man left Marblehead with the young girl of sixteen, who had occupied all his thoughts since his visit of a year before, took her to the city, and placed her in the best school that the town afforded. There she was taught those graces and accomplishments which were thought requisite to form a fashionable lady, and develop those charms of person and mind which had so attracted him at their first interview. But while our courtly knight was to the "manner born," bore a title, and was sur-

rounded by ladies and gentlemen of noble English families, the little barmaid was still only a country lass, and as she could not be received in the society to which he was accustomed in Boston, he determined to seek a home in the country. This was his reason for coming to Brampton.

His mansion on the hill, with its great halls supported by fluted columns, its broad staircases, tapestried walls, and finely carved marble mantels, with its ample wine-cellars, and secret passages, and its gardens lined with lilac hedges, was the wonder and admiration of the country people for miles around. Here with the beautiful woman whom he loved and with his many slaves, he spent the time in entertaining his political friends, in directing the affairs of his farm, in deer and fox hunting, and in fishing in the many brooks and streams with which his plantation abounded.

Requiring at length a change of climate, he visited England, and there received an official appointment which made it necessary for him

to take up his residence in Lisbon, at that period the most sumptuous court in Europe. Its young king was the richest, its opera was the finest, and the papal hierarchy there the most imposing outside of Rome. But even here, with these magnificent surroundings, the young girl who was reared in a log cabin on a wild New England shore shone so brilliantly among the resplendent dames as to attract the attention of the court circle, the extravagances and excesses of which were so soon to end in the most fearful tragedy of modern times.

On the first day of November, 1755, a day clear and cool, with not a shadow in the sky to foretell the impending doom, the baronet had gone out to witness the celebration of high mass, for it was All Saints' Day, a festival of imposing ceremony in the Romish Church.

He was driving with one of the court ladies when suddenly a hollow, rumbling sound was heard; the earth heaved and yawned; the carriage was overturned and the occupants were buried among falling palaces and towers;

whelmed in that appalling destruction of the earthquake which, made that first day of November memorable throughout the civilized world. In a few awful moments sixty thousand people had perished, and a large part of the splendid capital was in ruins. The horses of the baronet were instantly killed, and such was the agony of the lady at his side, that she clenched with her teeth the sleeve of his coat and drew blood from his arm.

Meanwhile his companion, whom he had left in the morning at his residence situated in that part of the city where the earthquake was not so severely felt, overcome with terror for his safety, and knowing the direction his drive had probably taken, started in search of him. Making her way through these soul-sickening scenes, she at length heard the accents of his well-known voice.

Years before, he had saved her from a life of drudgery and toil; it was now her turn to rescue him. This awful experience, when an appalling death stared him in the face, was to

him a veritable judgment-day. In its horrors all that was conventional and subordinate was forgotten, and they stood equal and alone with God. Brought thus face to face with the eternal, in immediate expectation of death, he made a solemn vow, that if God would show pity and spare his life, he would, as far as possible, atone for the wrong done to the beautiful woman who had for years enriched his life, had presided at his table, had shone brilliantly in the various positions where he had placed her, by making her his lawful wedded wife; and he was true to his word.

The following summer the baronet, with Lady Agnes, returned to Brampton, where he remained until his health again began to decline.

The scarlet coat which bore marks of the agony of the lady with whom he was driving, and some other relics of that eventful day, were kept hung on the tapestried walls in one of the chambers of the manor-house, where, in fasting and prayer, the baronet always spent

the anniversary of his deliverance from the dreadful catastrophe.

It was owing perhaps to the dismal associations connected with this solitary chamber, that the place acquired the reputation of being haunted, and ghosts and goblins were seen to stalk through the lonely woodlands in the dusky twilight.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Holmes, in his poem entitled "Agnes," speaks of the chamber

"Where hung the rapier blade he wore  
Bent in its flattened sheath;  
The coat the shrieking woman tore  
Caught in her clenching teeth."

The baronet returned to England in the year 1768, and soon after died. The Lady Agnes came back to her estate in Brampton and remained until the Revolution, when, being so closely allied to the English, she was looked upon with suspicion, and it was thought best for her to leave the country.

In May, 1775, it was resolved in Provincial

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Stowe alludes to this in "Old-Time Folks."

Congress that my lady be permitted to go to Boston and have soldiers to attend her. A guard of six soldiers defended her, as about the first of June she entered Boston, then in possession of the British troops.

From the windows of her house on Garden Street she witnessed the imposing drama of the battle of Bunker Hill, and aided with her own hands to assuage the sufferings of the wounded in the battlefield. She soon after sailed for England and was there married to a gentleman of wealth. She died at the age of fifty-seven.

The manor-house was long shown as a relic of the past. Enough remained of its stately trees, shaded walks, and picturesque nooks, to denote the taste and culture of the accomplished English baronet and his beautiful lady. The story of its former tenants, their balls and parties and dinners, their grand equipages and fine dresses, was the theme of many a winter evening, when the young people gathered around the blazing logs in the broad kitchen fireplaces of the simple homes of Brampton, to

hear their grandames tell of the glory which had long since passed away.

Every land has its romance of fair women taken from poverty and toil to shine in high places, as pearls are drawn from the ooze of the sea to gleam in the crowns of kings. But not one has a more rare and thrilling story than that of the lovely Agnes taken from a fisherman's hut, and the menial work of a Marble-head inn, to adorn the aristocratic circles of England.

NOTE.—The historical data in this chapter are taken from Nason's "History of Middlesex County."



## CHAPTER II.

## BRAMPTON.

THE cultivated acres of the English baronet and of the retired rector were in strange contrast with the barren hills and pastures of some parts of Brampton, which were so rocky that it was a common saying of the old people that the devil in going to and fro over the earth broke his apron-strings when he reached this place, and the stones which would have sufficed for many miles of country were emptied on the hills of Brampton.

The sheep, so it was said, had to have their noses sharpened, in order to nibble the wiry grass which sprang up between the thickly scattered stones. Huckleberries and blueberries were the chief products of the pastures, and blackberry vines spread over many an acre, covering the gray rocks in spring with

their delicate white blossoms, and brightening them in autumn with their gayly tinted leaves. Wild strawberries grew on the hillsides, and the sweet fern and hardhack and chiccory lifted up their heads in pretty contrast to the gray and tumbling stone walls which lined all the byways of Brampton.

The red honeysuckle waved in the crevices of the rocks, and the birds and bees feasted on the honey of its tiny cells; the wild cherry bloomed in the pastures; the mountain laurel skirted the woods, and the scarlet cardinal-flower was mirrored in the clear waters of every little stream.

The homely neglected mayweed grew unmolested between the wheel-tracks, so few were the wheels which rolled over the quiet roads of the village long ago; the mouse-colored pussy sprang up everywhere out of the dust, and refused to be trodden down by the weary plod of the ploughman or the pattering footsteps of the little children. The dusty road which was the main street and highway had on either side

*Woolly, white*

a narrow footpath flanked by a dilapidated stone wall, along which grew mullein and milkweed, burdock and tansy and yarrow enough to supply all the herb-closets in the neighborhood. An occasional clump of wild roses and sweet-brier beguiled the children in the springtime on their way to school, and in the autumn the goldenrod and purple aster were plucked by little hands, to adorn the teacher's desk in the small bare schoolhouse, which stood at the end of the road, on the village green.

Brampton was on the turnpike, about midway between Boston and Worcester. The tavern in the town, where the stages and the great teams stopped, and where a stray traveller could put up for the night, was a low, rambling stone structure standing close to the road, halfway up the ascent of the meeting-house hill. High among the rocks of a huckleberry pasture, and remote from any habitation, was a rude stone building where powder had been stored in Revolutionary times. The place was familiarly known as "Powder-House Hill;" it was a

landmark as one drove from the neighboring towns, for all roads went *up* to reach Brampton, and it was the farthest limit to which the village children were allowed to stray in their rambles for nuts and berries, or for wild flowers in the springtime,—indeed they were sometimes awed by being told that “Injuns would ketch ’em” if they went beyond.

The inhabitants of Brampton were, as a whole, honest, upright, God-fearing people. Their outlook was narrow. They were entirely absorbed in the small cares and duties of every-day life, and had little interest beyond them. Though homely and sometimes rough in phrase and manner, they were kindly in feeling, with true regard and respect for each other, and were always ready to help in time of need.

Life then was empty of resources compared with our day. There were neither public nor private libraries; schools and books were few, and the only communication with the outside world was through a weekly paper, or the

news furnished by some passing traveller. The minister of Brampton was known and respected through Massachusetts for his scholarship and character, but his limited library was, with rare exceptions, devoted to his profession, as were the few books of the doctor and the lawyer to theirs.

After the Revolutionary period the country was impoverished; physical needs were uppermost; the people were everywhere forced to attend to the necessities of life. The Sabbath supplied the only change in the hard routine of toil, and that was filled with stern religious exercises. Yet affection, taste with love of fun, all the genial qualities of humanity, were there, and, despite restrictions, showed themselves now in open and now in furtive ways to cheer and enliven the rugged path. "Thanksgiving" was the family festival, the recognized holiday; the keeping of Christmas was frowned upon as something pertaining to Popery. Sometimes the young people departed from the usual austere monotony on Thanks-

giving evening and indulged in a ball at the old stone tavern. Ordinations and town elections, courtings, weddings, tea parties, quiltings, huskings, and an occasional dance were the pleasures and festivities of the year.

## CHAPTER III.

## AN OLD-TIME MEETING-HOUSE AND MINISTER.

THERE was but one house of worship in the early days of Brampton. This was a two-story wooden structure, unpainted, with double rows of windows, and without spire or ornament of any kind. There was not a tree to protect it from the blasts of winter or the summer's scorching sun, and but for the fact that it had a graveyard beside it, and a long row of sheds behind it, a stranger might not have recognized it as a house of worship. It had no fire in winter, and the piercing winds blew through the loose, unprotected windows, and the snow formed little white banks on the window-sills. Often the minister's voice was lost in the roar and rattle of the wind, and his face was well-nigh obscured by the clouds of breath that rose as incense in the crisp, cold air. In summer



THE OLD MEETING-HOUSE AT BRAMPTON.





the sun poured in upon the tired old people, and the little children slept on the laps of their weary, nodding mothers, and the breeze stole by rustling the leaves of the time-worn "Watts and Select" hymn-books, making grateful diversion for the children in the monotony of the sermon, few words of which they could understand until the minister came to "tenthly," when they knew their imprisonment was nearly at an end. Oh, the delight it was to them when the last singing came, and they could rise from their hard seats, where for two mortal hours they had been suspended between heaven and earth, unable to touch the back of the pew or to stretch their little feet to the floor!

The sermons were divided by a recess at noon, that is, the first half of the sermon was preached in the morning, and at noon the women who lived at a distance, and had brought their luncheon with them, ate it while they chatted with their neighbors, sometimes over the good minister's discourse, but more

often over their little housekeeping successes and failures, the arrival of a stranger in town, or a new courtship among the young people, the advent of a calf or the killing of a pig, the sickness of Mis' B., and the failure in Mis' A.'s soap-making.

Meanwhile the men were gathered in groups on the sunny side of the church or in the adjoining horse-sheds, discussing their own affairs, the town politics, the state of the crops, and the condition of things in general. All these were topics of absorbing interest to the simple country folk, whose only deviation from the daily routine was the arrival of the weekly newspaper, and the Tuesday prayer-meeting, which was held in winter in the little entry of the meeting-house. This meeting was held in the entry because the handful of people could gather closer together in this narrow space, and, as Deacon Low said, "there was more freedom of speech."

The exercises never varied. After the minister had opened the meeting with a long prayer,

in which he never forgot to make mention of the individual sins of each member of his flock, and of the collective sins of all the nations of the earth, a hymn was given out, and not one stanza was ever omitted. Deacon Low took out his tuning-fork, and, touching it solemnly on the back of his chair, said, "We will sing it to the tune of Haddam," or perhaps he selected "Saint Martin's." The good deacon seldom ventured beyond. His repertoire of tunes was limited.

There was a high gallery all around the meeting-house, where the colored people sat; there were five or six in the village, relics of the slave-trade; and here sat also the town paupers, and an occasional stranger. There was a pew near the pulpit reserved for any who were hard of hearing. The deacons always sat together in a high-backed, square pew at the left of the pulpit, which was so high the old people can remember to this far-off day how their childish necks ached when they tried to behave like their elders and look at the

preacher, and how their childish hearts quaked with fear lest the sounding-board should fall and crush the dear old minister; and then, perhaps, they fell to meditating upon the deep problem, whether, if it should suddenly drop, he would spring up from the pulpit beneath like a jumping-jack from his box.

This was more interesting to their youthful minds than the questions which at that time were agitating the theological world, namely, whether angels occupied space so that four could dance on the point of a cambric needle at one and the same moment of time, and whether the lower regions were paved with infants' skulls.

The seats in the gallery opposite the pulpit were reserved for the singers, and Deacon Low, standing in front, kept time, while the bass-viol, after twanging and creaking, and having the strings and screws several times adjusted, "wallowed through the lugubrious tunes like a hippopotamus." The bass-viol was the only instrument considered suitable, in those primi-

tive days, for Sunday use, and as an accompaniment for psalm-singing.

The three important personages in a primitive New England village were, the minister, the doctor, and the lawyer. The minister played the most important part, and the minister of Brampton was distinguished many miles around for his quaint originality and his free speech. He was a slight man of medium height, with thin flowing locks, soft blue eyes, and a benignant expression. He was like Victor Hugo's good bishop Welcome. It was a festival whenever he appeared. He blessed the children, and they blessed him. Indeed, he never passed a child without some pleasant word and a friendly pat on the head.

He considered neither hardship nor toil in the presence of duty; his salary was three hundred and thirty-three dollars and thirty-three cents, which sum was always scrupulously paid to him on a certain day of the year by the treasurer of the town. Everybody in the parish, in those days, was taxed to support the

minister, and of course everybody knew about his various devices for eking out a scanty living. He cultivated the land which was set apart for the use of the minister in the early settlement, and cut with his own hands and sold the wood and timber from the surrounding forest. He said to the people, "Do you know by what means I have procured cattle and sheep, and have furnished my house? This is because I have been doing your business, and neglecting my own. Your business is, to support your minister, and that is what I have been doing for twenty years. My business is to study and preach, and in this I have never abounded. While you give me meadow-hay pay, I shall give you meadow-hay sermons. I have had occasion to say many severe things to you during my ministry, and you have always had the good-sense to know you richly deserved them." <sup>1</sup>

One cold day in winter, the minister was taking a load of ship-timber to Boston, and having driven the slow oxen for many miles, he

became weary and faint, and stopped at a way-side inn for rest and refreshment. He was shivering with the burden of age and the bitter cold of a New England day, and he asked the landlord to give him some hot whiskey. The landlord, in a fit of conscientiousness quite unusual to men of his guild, noticing his trembling hand, said, "I think you have had enough of that sort, old man." The minister gave no word of reply, but touched the tired beasts with his heavy whip, and plodded along to find a more friendly hostelry.

Shortly after this, he exchanged with the clergyman who preached in the village where this circumstance occurred. The conscientious landlord recognized in the eloquent preacher the old man to whom he had refused the warming draught, and made a most profuse apology, as he came down from the pulpit; to which the good man replied, "You did just right, my friend, in refusing me if you thought I had already taken enough. If you will always be as honest with others, I will be content."



Political feeling ran as high in the little community over the election of selectmen, town-treasurer, and pound-keeper, and the party feeling was as strong and bitter between Whig and Tory, as it is in our day between Democrat and Republican. The minister, who was a Federalist, never failed to preach a political sermon on Fast and Thanksgiving days, and on the Sunday before town meeting. At one time, when the political interest was more intense than usual, he chose for his text these words: "Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man."

He was very pointed in his remarks, and after preaching a long sermon, and making suitable application of his text, the leading man in the opposing party, who could endure the personal thrusts no longer, interrupted him by saying, "Mr. Howe, you might as well call names."

The minister fixed his piercing eyes on the Tory, and, with his long, bony finger pointing directly at him, in most emphatic manner re-

peated his text, "Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man. There is no need of calling names when conscience is doing its work so well."

The Tory sat down, and no more was heard from him in the meeting-house, but during the recess between the morning and afternoon services, a more spirited caucus than usual was held by the little knot of Tories behind the meeting-house sheds, and the old moss-covered stones in the adjoining graveyard, could they have spoken, would have told of dangerous and seditious speeches made by the Tories concerning the Federalists.

The treasurer of the town was also the physician. Like all good citizens, he went to meeting on Thanksgiving Day, when the service began at ten o'clock in the morning. Once soon after it commenced he was called to visit a patient six miles distant in a neighboring town. The road was hilly and rocky, and it required at least an hour and a half to take the drive. He visited the patient, ministered

to her needs, and returned in time to hear the closing hymn and benediction, and to take his wife home, with the live coals in her little foot-stove turned to dead-white ashes, and to the Thanksgiving turkey and plum-pudding, which the ample brick oven had kept enfolded in its warm embrace for two hours beyond the usual dinner time.

The good minister was subject to fits of melancholia. There was a conference of the neighboring clergymen to consult about establishing a religious journal of some kind. Each clergyman in turn gave his opinion as to the importance of such a step, and they agreed that it was a wise measure and would tend to the furtherance of the gospel.

Mr. Howe was the last to speak. He rose slowly and said, in low, long-drawn-out tones, "Brethren, I have no doubt that a religious journal would be very useful, but, for myself, it would be of no account, for, brethren, my day is almost done; my work is nearly finished, and this is probably the last time I shall ever meet

with you; the next time you come together, it will be to attend my obsequies. May the Lord bless you, brethren, and make you more useful workers in His vineyard than I have been."

He sat down, and there was a solemn pause for a moment, and then a brother minister, who was acquainted with Mr. Howe's peculiarities, and was himself noted for quick wit and ready repartee, arose, and said, "Brethren, I have a proposition to make. We are together to-day, and you all know how difficult it is for us to come together, living as we do at considerable distances from each other, and burdened as we are with many duties. I move, as brother Howe is so soon to depart this life, that we have his funeral services now, while we are assembled together. It will save a good deal of trouble and expense. I put the motion."

The motion was no sooner put than Mr. Howe, roused from his despondency by the railery of his brother minister, rose to his feet, and said, "I object! I won't die as long as you

live!" For the time being, the current of the good man's thoughts was turned by this little incident, and he went home in a more cheerful frame of mind.

He used to pray with great unction, and sometimes it appeared to the unsanctified that his prayers were addressed more to the congregation than to the Deity. He had a strong prejudice against the Baptists, and it happened that he was invited to make the ordaining prayer in a neighboring town, where there was a thriving Baptist church. He prayed that the Lord would "put a stop to all false teaching, and put down all heresies and isms, especially the Baptists."

The brother minister who sat behind him in the pulpit—the same who had proposed his premature funeral service—pulled his coat-tail at this point, and said: "You'd better die *now*, brother Howe."

At one time during his ministry the singers took offence and left the choir. The next Sunday he related to his people a remarkable

dream he had had, the purport of which was that the singers died and went to heaven, but were denied admittance because they had refused to sing.

He once said to a brother minister, "You're a very successful preacher, brother."

"Why so?" said the minister.

"Because," was the reply, "you preach the doctrine of total depravity, and your people practise it so well."

"Settle your minister on a cart," said he, in giving the "charge" to the people in a neighboring church, who were about to settle a new minister, "for the former pastors of this church have been like Paul's two companions, 'chosen to travel rather than to stay.'"

One of his parishioners offered the minister a turkey on condition that he would tell him all his faults. Mr. Howe declined the offer, saying he could not work so cheap. Upon being urged, he consented to take the turkey, and as he thought occasion required, he went to pay off a little of the debt. At length the victim

became irritated at the discernment and fidelity of the parson, and said to him one day, "Mr. Howe, I want to tell you some of your faults." "Not by a good deal," said the parson, "I never sold you a turkey."

The good minister has long since gone to his reward. His grave is in the little churchyard on the hilltop, and adjoining the spot where stood the old meeting-house in which he preached so long and faithfully. His voice is heard no more, but his influence still lives, and his name is cherished in the homes of Brampton.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE GOOD DOCTOR.

WHO can ever forget the good doctor of Brampton, with his stately bearing and genial manner, as night and day he drove over the rocky hill-roads for fifty miles around, to minister as kindly and faithfully to the poorest child, for whom he would receive no pay, as to the well-to-do farmer, who would give him a dollar for driving ten miles on a dark night? A dollar was the fee for a night visit, and fifty cents for a day visit, but as the doctor's bill was always the last to be considered in making up the family accounts, it was often forgotten, and he never pressed his claims. Every man and woman regarded him as a friend, and there was not a boy in all the country round who was so ill-mannered as not to make his best bow, or a little girl who would fail to drop her



prettiest courtesy, when the good doctor passed along the narrow road in his small gig, with the saddle-bags, from which he dispensed life-giving potions. The mothers often said his smiles and caresses were as efficacious as his pills and powders. Into his ears were poured all the tales of want and sorrow, and his wise counsel helped many a poor man and woman over the hard places, which were not few or far between in those early days; and many a death-bed was made calm and peaceful by his tender words of hope and sympathy.

His presence was a benediction, and his smile a blessing. He stepped with the dignity of a prince, and his dress would have befitted a king. He always wore a white waistcoat and the finest of cambric shirt ruffles; his gray hair, braided and tied with a black ribbon, hung in a queue over his velvet coat-collar, and his shoes were bright and adorned with shining buckles. His speech was quiet and dignified, and his bow had the elegance and the military grace of the high-born gentleman of that period. To this



THE GOOD DOCTOR OF BRAMPTON.



day his memory is precious to the old people who recall his loving ministrations in their childhood, and the genial courtesy with which he would stop his gig as he passed them on their way to school to inquire for their mothers, and to offer a peppermint or a penny, always with the injunction that they must be good and obedient children.

The doctor, though devoted to his profession, gave a good deal of time to the politics of the day, and never, through fear of losing a patient, hesitated to speak his mind. He was a thorough Whig, and had a large following in the town. On election days his house was the rendezvous of his party, who lived in the outskirts and at a distance from the village. A long table was always spread in the great room, the floor of which was painted with Masonic emblems—for the doctor was a prominent Mason—and covered with substantial viands for their noonday repast. Roast beef, plum-puddings, mince pies, and, above all, the famous 'lection cake, which was a kind of sweetened bread stuffed with

raisins, and varnished with molasses, and which was never used except on March meeting days. On these occasions the great fireplace was filled with hickory logs, over which the steaming kettle hung on an iron frame, and the old men gathered around the cheerful blaze to smoke their pipes and drink the foaming flip, while they talked of the success or failure of their favorite candidates.

The good doctor had "continuing courtesy," and "his hospitality ran fine to the last."

The doctor's Sundays were spent in visiting his patients. Many a chronic invalid would defer sending for him through the week, and expect him to drive a dozen miles for a Sunday visit, so that he was wont to say, "I have so many bodies to attend to, I have no time to look after my soul." It was his habit to spend his Sunday evenings with his friend, the lawyer, with whom he discussed the topics of the day, and to whom he often deferred in matters that lay outside his own province, for the lawyer was liberal in his religious opinions, and was



MISS HANSCOM



considered quite heretical by the village people. The doctor was a man of broad views, and welcomed any advance of thought. His wide experience and intimate knowledge of many lives, and the affecting scenes he had witnessed by many deathbeds, made him more charitable and hopeful for humanity than most of the accepted creeds of his day would have warranted.

In these quiet Sunday evening talks the two fast friends settled all the affairs of Church and State, quite to their own satisfaction, and in a manner which would often have astounded the good old minister and his deacons, who, in the meeting-house near by, were deciding the affairs of time and eternity as if to them alone the secrets of the Almighty had been revealed. Although so far from the centre of thought, the doctor kept up a lively interest in the progress of scientific discovery, especially in what pertained to his own profession. A small square three-legged "candle-stand" stood before the open fireplace in the "keeping-



room," holding a candle and snuffers on a little tray, and here, every night, it was his custom, until the small hours of the morning, to read the "Medical Journal" and the few books which composed his library.

The great occasion of the year, with him, was the annual medical meeting in Boston, which he never failed to attend. The day he spent at this convention was his one festival.

His skill and experience were such that he was widely known and greatly respected. Many were the long, hard drives he took over the hills to adjoining and distant towns for consultation with other physicians regarding some difficult case that had baffled their skill. He had a practical sagacity which made him trusted by every one, and he was equally skilful in applying the surgeon's knife and in administering advice to those who needed it.

When the good doctor died there was mourning far and near. Through two generations he had been a sympathetic, unfailing friend and helper to both rich and poor. The rich found in

him a ready adviser, and the poor never went unaided from his door. In the last year of his life, although suffering from a fatal disease, he visited his patients long after he had to be supported to his gig and lifted from it to the sick-room. He was laid in the little burying-ground of the village where he had lived his busy self-sacrificing life for more than seventy years, and no sadder day ever dawned upon Brampton than that of his funeral. There was a sense of loneliness and loss in every home, and each family felt as if one of its own members had been called away.

No more across the hills he winds  
At morn or set of sun ;  
Sweet be his rest beneath the pines !  
His journeys all are done.  
But long as Brampton's woods are green  
And household memories dear,  
His name shall be a gracious word,  
To help, and guide, and cheer, —  
And, where the sunlight fairest shines,  
Revered his grave beneath the pines.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE SCHOOLHOUSE AND TAVERN.

VERY early in the settlement of Brampton a committee was chosen to agree with a school-master, and to provide school-dames for the sum of five shillings per week. The school was to be kept as long as the annual tax-money appropriated for it should hold out; this was never more than three months in the summer or winter, and often six weeks was the limit. The schoolhouse stood opposite the meeting-house, and around it the "sumach grew and blackberry vines were running." In the interior of the schoolroom, facing the door, stood "the teacher's desk, scarred with raps official." Around the sides and against the wall, directly beneath the windows, were the seats of the elder scholars; the second row was devoted to those next in age, down to the small benches,

hard and bare, where the little ones sat, with their feet dangling, until they were called to read their A B C's or spell their A B Ab's, standing in a row, their little toes, guiltless of shoes in summer, all carefully set to a crack in the floor.

To an on-looker, keeping the line would seem to have been of far greater importance than the proper spelling of the column in the day's lessons. The punishment for missing a word was, while keeping the toes exactly on a crack, to hold the finger on one of the nails driven into the board in front. Sometimes half of the class were in this attitude of expiation.

The room was warmed by a large fireplace, the larger boys taking turns in building the fire; and every other minute some boy or girl was calling out, "Say, teacher, can I go to the fire?" For while those seated near the fireplace were on the verge of roasting, the children in the back part of the room were as near freezing. The farmers in turn kept the wood-pile supplied, toiling through the snows of the

drifted roads to deposit the great logs that were "to beat the frost-line back with tropic heat." In summer this pile of logs by the schoolhouse door was the gymnasium of the children, where they expanded their chests and rounded their muscles, climbing, leaping, and running.

The course of study included "readin', 'ritin', spellin', syferin', jografry, an' part fust of Barratt's grammer." The committee-man was chosen with small regard to his educational fitness, but rather with reference to his social prominence, and the teacher whom he selected was usually some favorite relative, chosen with as little regard to competency for the situation.

The teachers "boarded round" in the "dees-trict" a week or more in each place, and their coming was a great excitement in the families. They were put into the best room, and usually spent their evenings helping the laggards in their ciphering, or in paying attention to the pretty daughter of the house—attention that not infrequently resulted in a long course of domestic education under the same master.

The committee-man always visited the school at its close, and, during the whole term, the children were trained for this eventful visit. He was accustomed to announce himself at his coming in some such form as this: "Child'en, I s'pose you all know what ye go t' school fer — 'tis so's t' appear well when the committee-man comes in. Now, child'en, I hope you'll all speak up loud an' do the best ye can, an' stand right on the line. Now, see how many of ye can answer this question: Who was the fust President?" The children answer; while a few named George Washington, some replied in a stentorian voice, "Christopher Columbus," others "General Cornwallis."

One little fellow stoutly maintained that it was the "Colonel o' the Brampton Militia" — the *greatest* man in his eyes. Thereupon the committee-man, roused to patriotism and to the opportunity of showing his superior knowledge, would say: "Child'en, didn't yer never all o' yer hear the story o' George Washington, how he went out with his little hatchet an' cut

his father's cherry-tree, an' when his father asked him who done it he spoke up like a man, and said, 'I done it with my little hatchet; I can't tell a lie.' Now, child'en, alers remember that George Washington was the fust President of the United States, 'cause he never told a lie."

Of scarcely less importance to both children and teacher were the visits of the minister, which were made two or three times annually, for the minister at Brampton was greatly interested in the education of the youthful mind. He prepared with much care a catechism for the little ones, which they were expected to commit to memory and repeat in these visits; he also had a favorite poem printed, entitled "Phebe the Blackberry Girl," and gave copies to the girls, offering a prize to the little maiden who should recite it without making a mistake.

The old stone tavern by the roadside, half-way up the meeting-house hill, played an important part in the life of Brampton. Here all the balls were held in the low primitive hall lighted by tallow candles; and here on the

evening of election day the "selectmen" of the town had their annual supper. At the balls the company assembled at five o'clock in the afternoon, and danced until daylight the next morning. Oh, the preparations that were made for these great occasions, the curlings and the crimpings, the starchings and the frillings, the bows and belts and high-heeled slippers that never at any other time saw the light of day! The lofty turtle-shell comb, and the string of gold beads, were as indispensable to the belle as were the high stiff stock, the white waistcoat, and the knee buckles and ruffled shirt to the beau.

Many of the party came on horseback, the girls riding on pillions behind their attendants. The officers of the Brampton Militia were foremost in all the festivals of the town, and the colonel always led off in the dance. The fiddler made the music for these gatherings, sitting in a little raised enclosure at the end of the hall, while he called the changes in the figures. Toddy was frequently passed during the even-



ing, and a "turkey supper" was served at midnight, and the table loaded with the most inviting products of the farms and gardens. As the hours of the night wore on, the dance became more merry, and the tongues more free. Then it was they began to put in the fancy steps—the "pigeon wing" and the "double shuffle"—until the crowing of the cocks, and the dawning day, forced them to retire. Of course the balls were confined to the more worldly part of the community; it was a great sin and an occasion of discipline if a church-member should so far fall into the ways of the unregenerate as to attend one. A dance was always made the occasion of serious reproof from the minister, and at the evening meeting the good old deacon would pray most earnestly for "them that was dancing on the verge of eternity."

Election suppers were the occasion of great hilarity, representing, as they did, only the successful party. As the evening waned, the speeches and toasts waxed brilliant and noisy, and many a plan was concocted for the con-

tinued discomfort of their opponents. The low bar-room was the gathering-place on a winter's evening for the village gossips to play "fox and geese" and "high-low-jack," to take their nightly draught, and to discuss the doings of their neighbors and the latest bit of outside news.

If, in its semi-weekly visits, the Boston and Worcester stage brought a stranger to the tavern, it was cause of great excitement and curiosity, and he was plied with questions as to the state of the Boston market and the doings of the General Court. The old gray stone tavern still stands by the roadside, but the generations that frequented it have passed away, and the loaded teams and stages have given place to the railway, whose trains thunder at the foot of the hill.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE VILLAGE ORACLE.

THERE are in every village those who act as the guardians of other people's affairs; those who know everybody's business, and advise in all matters, great or small. Aunt Puah was the oracle of Brampton. She was endowed by nature with wise judgment, keen wit, and the kindest heart; everybody called her Aunt Puah, and everybody sought her counsel and advice. She was a short, delicate-looking woman, with lines of anxious care upon her face, and her shoulders rounded with hard work. Her calico gown was always scrupulously neat, her plain lace cap was tied with ribbons, clean, though faded from frequent washing; she wore a colored handkerchief about her neck on ordinary days, and on rare occasions a square of soft white muslin was

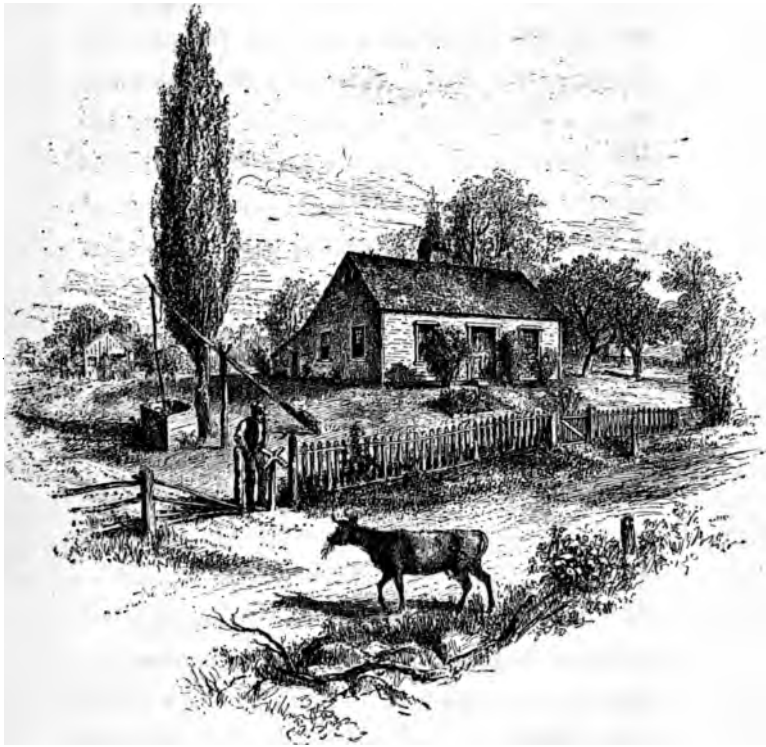
folded across her breast; and at all times she was adorned with a string of gold beads, and small gold rings in her ears. The capacious calico bag which held the knitting work and the snuff-box hung on her arm, and the quill knitting-sheath was never missed from her side. The least pleasant feature of her face was her very small gray eyes, but even these were pleasant to those who knew her, and when once, in her early married life, an old lover called upon her, a neighbor chanced to overhear him say to her as he was leaving, "I allers did think you had the beautifulest eyes I ever see in a woman's head."

It was often said in Brampton that if Aunt Puah had not been "hitched to an off ox" (this was the fitting term applied to her husband), and could have had advantages, she would have shone in society. As it was, she was simply the oracle of the village. She lived in a small white house that stood very near the road, and on either side the low front door there was a "laylock" bush, which Aunt Puah "set much

by." There were not many lilacs in those days; the fragrant purple blossoms were the delight of the children, and the little girl upon whom Aunt Puah bestowed one, on her way to school, was the envy of all her playmates.

On one side of the narrow, grass-grown path that led to the house was a festival of "Bouncing Bets," those faded, persistent, homely flowers, which will always grow, whether any one wants them or not; and on the other side a low paling enclosed a few square feet of earth where there were marigolds and bachelor's-buttons, touch-me-nots, sweet-williams, and poppies, growing together in pretty confusion, and in which Aunt Puah took great pride and comfort.

Right under the front-room windows grew a great clump of red "pinys," enclosed in a barrel-hoop, and woe to the marauding hen that ventured near them! At the back of the house the low moss-covered roof slanted almost to the ground, and there was a bed of caraway seed and fennel growing just under the eaves, for



**AUNT PUAH'S HOUSE.**



Aunt Puah thought it very unwise to go to meeting without a sprig or two of fennel and a few caraway seeds or a bunch of dill, in case one should be "overtaken" with drowsiness in the midst of the sermon. She used to say, "I wouldn't have our minister see me nod, when he was preachin' one o' his beautiful sermons on election and predestination, for nothin' in the world."

There was a tall Lombardy poplar tree near the old well-sweep, which Aunt Puah treasured, because, she said, it "looked very respectable, as if folks had lived there a long time; and, for her part, she meant to keep up an appearance of respectability, let what would come."

Aunt Puah's husband was uncle to everybody, simply because he was her husband. He represented a type of New England character which was not unusual in those days of hardship and toil, though it is to be hoped there were not many quite as hard and narrow and knotty as he. He was one of those people who seem to have a grudge against the whole human



race. He was always haggling with Providence. After taking care of his garden, a small patch behind the house, he spent his time at the little turn-gate just by the old well-sweep, where he would stand for hours with his hands in his trousers pockets, his old clay pipe in his mouth, and his ancient straw hat drawn down over his eyes, exchanging glances with his one cow which was driven up early in the afternoon to supplement her poor living in the sterile, worn-out pasture, by cropping grass on the roadside.

"Uncle Puah," as the children called him, never smiled; he took a lugubrious view of everything, and all the evils under the sun were attributed to "the pride o' the airth." If the clouds were seen in the west, he would growl out to the neighbor passing by, "Gad! the clouds are shettin' down on the mountains, the world will be drowned out, and the crops 'll all mould and mildew." If it failed to rain, "Gad! the crops 'll all dry up, an' the pride o' the airth 'll ruin the nation."

One day Uncle Puah slipped on the newly scrubbed kitchen floor, and ignominiously fell with a pail of water in his hands. As soon as his perturbed spirits would allow him to speak, he said: "It's nothin' but pride that makes women folks forever washin' up the floor. Gad! as I've said afore, the pride o' the airth 'll ruin the nation."

So, a slip upon the clean white floor of the kitchen, the failure of the potato crop in the little garden, the news of a war with England or of a destructive earthquake or tornado, all were charged to "the pride o' the airth."

Aunt Puah confided to some of her friends one day, when she had been more than usually tried, that "a crabbed old man was a pooty disagreeable crittur."

There was a gnarled quince bush in one corner of the little garden, and a few barberry bushes grew along the walls, which Uncle Puah often threatened to cut down, because, he said, "they take up the room where potatoes had ought to be growin', and it's nothin' but the

‘pride o’ the airth’ that makes women folks want to use up sugar makin’ ‘quince sass’ — for his part he’d ruther have a cabbage than all the quince sass in Brampton.”

This was the one interference that Aunt Puah could not brook, and she used to say, with a good deal of spirit — “I vum, pa! I’ve gi’n in to you in almost everything, but I’ll be hanged if I’ll give up that ’ere quince bush while I live! I’ve kept house above forty year, an’ I never failed o’ making quince per-serve, and, in my opinion, it’s pleggy shif’less for any housekeeper not to make up quince in the fall o’ the year; it’s so handy to have in the house in case a neighbor drops in unexpected; it would be disgraceful not to have quince per-serve when the minister comes to tea.”

It was equally shiftless, in the estimation of the dear old woman, whose memory will always be kept green in Brampton, if the catnip and the tansy were not gathered and stored away on a certain day of the month, to use in case of sudden sickness. This was especially needful

in Aunt Puah's case, because "pa" did not approve of spending money on doctors. In his view, "'arbs were as good medicine as there was," and a good dose of catnip or wormwood tea would cure all the ills of life.

It was thought that the educational advantages of Brampton were not sufficient for the lawyer's daughter, and she was sent to the city for a term of schooling. Aunt Puah remarked that "a gal must be mighty weak in the intel-lee' if she couldn't git learnin' enough in Brampton." When she returned from Boston she brought with her some paintings of flowers; she had taken lessons in painting and drawing for a whole term. She exhibited them with a good deal of pride, and Aunt Puah remarked, on looking at an artistic group of golden-rod, that "that 'arb is the beautifullest remedy for dyspepshy I know of;" and when she came to the delicate pink and white hardhack, she said, "There's no medicine that'll beat that when it's well steeped, for summer complaint." The fine arts received little attention from the toil-worn

practical men and women of those early days, and things were valued only as they were useful.

Aunt Puah was full of tenderness for every living creature. She milked with her own hands her one brindled cow, which did not always behave in the most approved manner. Sometimes a hungry, persistent fly would cause old Brindle to flourish her tail and use her legs in such a way as to dislodge Aunt Puah from the milking-stool, for which unruly conduct she always felt called upon to apologize. "I raly think, Mary," she said one day, "that the old cow felt sorry, for she looked around at me with her great eyes, when she see me layin' on the ground, as much as to say, 'I didn't mean to hurt ye.'"

The yellow cat was greatly respected in the family; there was a small heart-shaped hole cut in the outer door, where she could go in and out at pleasure, with no one to molest or to make her afraid; and her saucer of milk was as conscientiously placed in the corner of the great kitchen fireplace, three times a day, as

were the meals for the family placed upon the table.

Her small flock of fowls was always counted at set of sun, and if one giddy hen strayed farther than was her wont in search of grass-hoppers, there was great excitement in the little kitchen, for all must go betimes and properly to roost, with the cock at the head of the roosting-pole and each hen in her accustomed place.

The children, as they sat on the narrow sill of the kitchen door, used to watch the cat's little footprints on the sanded floor, and listen with delight to Aunt Puah's account of the pranks of her far-away childhood; but if they disturbed the cat her favorite reproof was, "Why *will* you act so like sarpints, when you can be so pooty?"

Aunt Puah used to say that, when she was young, her mother thought "gals had much better be at their spinnin' than to be prinkin' before the lookin'-glass," and so she used to take her little skillet of hot coals up to the

attic, when she was invited to go to a ball, and curl her hair on a pipe-stem, and dress herself in her best gown and dimity petticoat, with the few furbelows she had, while her mother took her afternoon nap. About five o'clock in the afternoon the young man who was to take her to the ball would appear, and, mounting the pillion, they would ride off together to spend the hours till daylight of the next morning in the merry dance.

Madam Price was a descendant of the Rev. Mr. Price, who came to Brampton while it was almost an unbroken forest. She still lived in the mansion her grandfather had built in the early days; a stately, solemn-looking dame, who wore a turban with a large lilac-colored bow on the top, and high-heeled boots, and carried a spacious bag on her arm, and always maintained her English style of living. She kept two negro servants, and was looked upon by the village people as somebody quite above the common.

She had also kept up the grounds around



**MADAME PRICE'S HOUSE.**





the old-fashioned mansion, and had introduced many new plants and shrubs, so that her garden, with its box borders and lilac hedges, was the wonder of the village people, and was regarded as a marvel of landscape gardening.

Her house was just opposite the meeting-house, and the wall which surrounded it was lined with lilacs. She was the first person who introduced lilacs into the village; and Aunt P'uah, going to church one bright Sunday morning, could not resist the impulse to break a branch of the pretty purple blossoms which hung temptingly over the wall, to adorn her spring hat, which was quite too simple for her taste. She knew that Madam Price was already at the head of her pew in church, and that she would be none the wiser and none the poorer for the loss of this one blossom. Thus adorned she walked up the broad aisle, feeling, as she remarked, "pooty complete;" but she had not proceeded far before she heard the giggling of the children and the thump of the tithing-man.

The minister cast one withering glance at the

lilac-trimmed hat, and she slunk away into the smallest corner of the great square pew, and improved the moments of the first long prayer, when all good, pious people were supposed to have their eyes closed upon earthly frivolities, to remove the offending blossom and consign it to the box of sawdust at the pew door. She had at least the satisfaction of feeling that Madam Price (her pew being the first under the pulpit) never knew who broke the branch from her cherished lilac bush.

## CHAPTER VII.

## AUNT PUAH.

AUNT PUAH kept close watch of all the front windows, and when a light was seen later than usual, in a neighbor's house, she would make some excuse for paying an early visit to make inquiries.

"I hope there's nobody sick in the house. Pa an' I see a light in the best room winder an' we kinder jealoused your Susan had a beau. I thought I'd jest run over and see if there was anything serious in't. I told pa I didn't think anybody was courtin' Susan for marriage; mebbe some young man had just called in a-viewin'. I raly hope when Susan does marry, she'll git a good provider and a stiddy meetincr, for she's a desarvin' gal, an' never speaks a misbeholden word o' nobody, an' she ought to have a likely husband."

There was great excitement one day, when an adventurous young man, who had taken his life in his hand and gone out some years before to "the Hio" (Ohio), to "set up" in business, arrived in the village, and called the same evening on Susan.

Aunt Pnah said, "He's a very pooty-appearin' young man, and I have heerd that he was a stiddy meetiner, but what a dreadful thing it would be, if he has any serious intention, to have Susan Pinkham, the likeliest gal that walks into our meetin'-house of a Sunday, go off to that heathenish place, where the sound o' the gospel is never heerd. When I see her a-settin' up in the singers' seats last Sunday, lookin' so complete, it fairly made the tears come into my eyes, to think of her goin' off there with a stranger, where she could never hear the sound of a meetin'-house bell. But then I said, 'Lord-a-massy, pa! maybe the fellar hain't no serious intentions, arter all.'"

It was found that the young man who came from "the Hio" did call for some purpose on

Susan Pinkham the first evening after he arrived. He went viewin' with serious intentions. Susan Pinkham soon changed her situation, and the young man took her away from Brampton to a fine house he had built in the vicinity of Boston. The old-time houses in a New England village were always placed very near the road, where every passer-by could be seen from the windows, and discussing their coming and going was the entertainment of the village folk. Susan Pinkham's grandmother was one of Aunt Puah's contemporaries, and when she left the neighborhood to go to the new and strange place to live with her granddaughter, there was great commotion, and Aunt Puah said *nothin'* seemed nat'ral. Never a day had passed for above forty year, that she had not run in to see Mis' Smith. She raly didn't know what to do with herself.

The spring following Mis' Smith's removal from Brampton, Aunt Puah was persuaded to go and pay a visit to her old neighbor. When she arrived and drove up the long avenue under

overhanging elms, with the green shaven lawn stretching out on either side, half a mile from the main road, she said, "Well, I should think Mis' Smith would be dreadful lonesome so fur from the road. I suppose they built here in a pastur, 'cause land was cheaper so out o' the way o' folks."

The meeting of the two old friends was exciting. Mis' Smith had a thousand questions to ask, and all the funerals and meetings and jelly-making and soap-making were talked over the first day, varied with a pinch of snuff now and then, and a nap after dinner. The knitting needles flew as fast as the tongues, and Mis' Smith confided to Aunt Puah that she never expected to have to live in a pastur. She had tried to get used to't, but for her part she never could see why people wanted to move out of the world.

"To tell the truth, Puah, there is a good many ways I can't get used to. Why, they have a bell to ring at the front door, and Susan thinks it is a dreadful thing if I jest

step out to see who's come. I always thought it was more neighborly to go to the door and let a neighbor in, than 'twas to send a hired gal to the door. Then they have them glass bowls to wash your hands in; I never was brot up to wash my hands at the table. But them holes in the floor where the heat comes up ere the *beeterer*. I tell Susan I druther have my old iron dogs with a good hickory log laid onto um in the great kitchen fireplace in Brampton, than all the furnaces and registers in the world. I tell ye, Puah, there is a dreadful fallin' off from the good old ways I have been used to all my life, but I spose I shall get used to't if I live long enough. It is putty hard to learn new ways arter you are seventy year old. Susan's husband is a very likely man, and never speaks a misbeholden word to nobody, and he is a complete pervider; *but dear me suz*, give me the old kitchen and the old garden in Brampton—I druther have um than all the bay winders, and furnaces, and hot-houses in the world."



The next day Aunt Puah took leave of Mis' Smith, and when she reached home she told pa she'd had a complete visit, but she was glad enough to git home to the old kitchen fireplace, and set down in the front winder where she could see folks go by. For her part she hoped she should never have to live in a pastur.

Aunt Puah had a nephew who lived in Boston, and was very "well-to-do" in worldly goods, though, as she remarked, "It's a great pity so likely a man ain't a more stiddy meet-ner." He had much affection for his aunt, and made it a point to visit her once a year. On these occasions he always urged her to pay a visit to the city, but she argued there would be no one to see to her chickens, and pig, and cow, if she should go away, and she never could be persuaded to leave her post of duty.

At length after frequent solicitations from the city relatives, helped on by Aunt Puah and the neighbors, who said "'Twas flyin' in the face o' Providence" to neglect such a chance, pa was persuaded to accept the invitation, and



AUNT PUAH.



go to Boston for a visit, where he had been but once before, and that when he was quite a young man. Aunt Puah brought out the Sunday coat and trousers, which of late years had seldom seen the light of day; the best "shirt front" and collar had an extra polish, and after much talk it was decided that pa must have a new necktie, and have the buttons changed on his coat, for she "wouldn't have her nephew's wife look down upon the country relations; she meant, if pa did go to the city, he should look as good as anybody."

Days and nights were spent in planning for this visit, and Aunt Puah said she "couldn't help layin' awake o' nights thinkin' o' what might happen to pa, for 'twas a very ventersome journey."

When the day arrived for him to start, she mildly suggested that she would like to have him buy her a small shawl; she had long wanted one to fling over her shoulders in a cool day, and she had no doubt he could find one which would be prettier and cheaper than anything she could find in Brampton, and "she

rally felt she would like something from the city; she didn't know as she had ever had anything in her life bought a-purpose for her in Boston." Pa, feeling a little tender at the thought of parting, promised to see what he could do about a shawl, if she would take good care of the "critters" while he was gone. She said: "Pa, you've never wrote me a letter in your life, an' I do hope when you git safely there, you'll write me a line and let me know how you bore the journey. I'll buy a sheet o' paper an' put a wafer in, so you won't have no trouble about that."

Pa was absent a week, and, faithful to his promise, he sent a letter. It read thus:—

RESPECTED LADY:—I got here safe, and I am very well, and hope you are the same. I shall be glad to git home, for the pride o' the airth that I see here is enough to ruin the nation. Gad! the women folks are too lazy to set up in their carriages. They loll back and look as if they was goin' to sleep, and I don't s'pose one of 'em could milk a cow or feed a pig. Abijah has a proper dairy o' horses, an' I have rid all over Boston. There wan't no need o' puttin' them boughten buttons on my coat, for nobody noticed 'em. I am

YOUR RESPECTED HUSBAND.

Aunt Puah treasured this letter to the last day of her life, and always kept it in a box in the corner of her upper bureau drawer in the spare chamber.

Saturday night brought the traveller home, and the neighbors all gathered to hear the exciting account of pa's journey to Boston. Aunt Puah's mind, if the truth must be told, was so exercised about the expected shawl, that she really could not give her undivided attention to the description of the visit and the journey, and, after the neighbors had gone, she said cautiously :

"Well, pa, you didn't bring my shawl, did ye?"

"Sartin!" he replied; "I allers do as I agree, don't I?" and began fumbling in his waistcoat pocket.

A small package was drawn from its capacious depths, and handed over with a good deal of satisfaction to his wife. Upon undoing it she found it to be a small handkerchief of some ordinary material, with a border. He said:

"I hope you'll be satisfied; I paid four an' six for't, and there's nine colors in the border."

In relating this experience, Aunt Pual said:

"Gals, I thought I should 'ave fainted away, when I see that ere leetle totty handkerchief in place o' the shawl I'd set my heart on."

## CHAPTER VIII.

## HULDY.

AUNT PUAH had a sister who was quite unlike herself — a modest, shy little woman, of whom she often used to talk.

“My sister Huldy,” she said, “was a puny, fair-complected gal, and when Parson Jones come to ask mother if she had any objections to his keepin’ company with Huldy, mother replied, ‘Why, no, Mr. Jones, I don’t know as I begretch ye keepin’ company with Huldy, but I raly pity the man that marries her, for she’s a proper weakly gal, and don’t know the fust thing about house-keepin’.’ Why, I s’pose Huldy couldn’t make a mess o’ sassages or a barrel o’ soap to save her life.

“But Mr. Jones wan’t the least grain discouraged, an’ afore long they was agreed, an’ it was settled as soon as mother could get the spinnin’



an' weavin' done they should be married, tho' Huldy said she didn't feel worthy of such a high position. Mother was proper forehanded, an' she allers kept a chist o' linen made up, so as to have it ready in case any one o' us gals should 'change our sitooation sudden.' I tell ye, we had an oncommon lot o' quiltins that summer. The neighbors thought bein' as Huldy was goin' to marry a minister, she had oughter have all the new figgers in quiltin', so we had the herrin'-bone, the log-cabin, and the fox an' geese patterns. Old Mis' Bragg got up one quilt with the oak-leaf pattern, an' when it was done it was pernounced the handsomest quilt that had ever been made in Brampton, but I tell ye it was an awful sight o' work. 'Twas all pink an' white. Huldy always kep' that for her spare-room bed, where the ministers used to sleep when they'd come for a change with Mr. Jones. Well, when it come fall Huldy was about ready. Mr. Jones was rather in a hurry, 'cause he thought a minister could be more useful if he had a suitable helpmeet; an' then

agin over in Berrytown, where he had just settled, the deacons an' some o' the forard church members thought there was them in the parish that would make complete ministers' wives. Deacon Stubs told Mr. Jones that there was them that was capable an' economical, an' acquainted with the ways o' the people, but ye see Mr. Jones didn't want no advice upon that subject, for his mind had been sot on Huldy ever since the day he met her at Priest Brown's ordination. Priest Brown was a distant kin to one o' our neighbors, an' she invited Huldy an' me to go over to Seekonk with her, to attend the ordination.

"It was the first o' October, an' 'twas a wonderful spell of weather, as hot as hayin' time. I had got me a new p'leese trimmed with squirrel skin fur. I had it ruther early, so that Em'line Buck could make it afore the fall work came on, an' I thought it was mighty lucky I had it ready to wear that day. When I waked up airly in the mornin' an' found how hot it was, I was fairly discouraged. Huldy

wore her white lace cape with a worked border, an' she said I'd better wear mine, but I said to myself, 'There won't be another ordination very soon, an' I vum! I'll wear that ere p'leese an' my new turbin, if I roast. Well, gals, I thought I should 've fainted away when I got inter the meetin'-house, for there was Madam Price right afore me, with a lace shawl on! She give me one look, an' I tell you I wish'd that p'leese was funder. I didn't feel nigh as complete as I thought I was goin' to, but I set up as straight as you please, an' made believe I wasn't a grain too warm.

"Uncle Biah, mother's oldest brother, follered the seas, an' he used to bring home curious things from forin parts. Once he brought some feathers from Africa, an' mother said I could have 'em, an' do what I was a mine to with 'em, though she did hope I wouldn't think of wearin' of 'em t' meetin', for she remembered what Deacon Low said once when two gals from the city come up to Brampton to board one summer; sez he to his wife, when they come



HULDAH AND MR. JONES.



into meetin' and leaned forard to pray, — I suppose they was some o' them 'Piscopal folks, — says he, 'What *are* them gals a-doin' of, wife?' Sez she, 'Sh! they are prayin'.' Sez he, 'A-prayin' with such trumpery on their heads as that! the Lord forgive 'em, such prayers as them 'll never rise 'bove the chimley tops!' To tell the truth, gals, in them days I didn't think so much about what the Lord would think as I did what sartain young fellers would think.

"I was amazin' fond o' bright colors, and I never could fall exactly into Deacon Low's way o' thinkin'. He said it was very onbecoming in a poor worm o' the dust to be decked out in ribbins an' feathers, and he used to pint to the graves an' repeat in marl'incholy tones, —

'Not all the gay pageants on earth,  
Can with a dead body compare.'

Wal, as I was sayin', I made my turbin, and put the feathers on, an' had 'em stand up in front, an' wore it to the ordination, tho' mother thought it was a leetle too gay. The day was so hot, an' the sermon so long, I was pooty

sleepy, an' I untied my turbin, an' afore I knew it, got to noddin', an' off went the turbin onto the floor. Sister Huldy give me an awful nudge with her elbow, but I tell ye, there wan't no need o' that nudge, for the fall o' the turbin knocked all the sleep out o' me. I cast my eyes 'round to Huldy, an' she was blushin' up to her hair; an' there was a smirk on everybody's face, an' I noticed that even the ministers had to use their handkerchiefs consid'able about that time. I wasn't long in pickin' up that turbin an' puttin' it on my head, but I was so flustered I put it on hind side afore, an' the feathers hung over the back instid o' the front. I twitched it 'round leetle by leetle, till I got it into place, an' that made everybody giggle the more, and Huldy couldn't get over it; she was dreadfully cut up 'bout it, an' I was thankful when that ordination was over. I never put that p'leese an' turbin on agin till sleighin' time, I tell ye.

“It was at this ordination that Mr. Jones first see Huldy; Miss Smith — she that was Polly

Brush—introduced 'em; she used to live in Brampton. Well, mother thought they better be married in the fall o' the year or the spring, on account of Huldy's clothes, as, bein' the minister's wife, she wouldn't like to wear her bridal bunnet for the first time out of season.

“Just before Huldy was married, as she was goin' to be united to a minister who had seen consid'able of the world,—he had been several times to Boston, an' once as fur as New York, to the westward,—it was thought best that she should visit the city to do a little tradin'. Pa give her ten dollars to spend, cautioning of her to be sure an' bring some on't back. Huldy was proper proud an pooty high in the instep, I tell yer, an' she set her heart on havin' a set of chany; she said she thought 'twould add to Mr. Jones's usefulness in the parish, if they had a nice set of chany to use when they invited the fust families to tea. Huldy had a good deal of taste about fixin' up, an' she thought it would be very suitable for the minister's wife, bein' that she always set in



the front pew, to have a ribbin with a small sprig on't for her bunnet, not a showy sprig but some modest figger, that wouldn't attract too much attention, an' take the minds of the people from the sermon. She thought if she could find a ribbin an' a set of chany just to her mind, she would be well fixed.

"I tell ye, gals, that was a great day when Huldý started off for Boston with the old white hoss tackled up into the shay, an' her ten dollars in her wallet. She invited Mr. Jones's sister to go with her. Mother was so worried an' pestered in her mind for fear she would be robbed, that she actoolly forgot to turn her cheeses that mornin'; why, I remember as well 's if 'twas yesterday, how we all stood in the great barn door an' watched that shay out of sight way down the meetin'-house hill, wonderin' what would happin to Huldý afore she got back. They started off at break o' day, an' got to Needham 'bout noon; there they stopped to bait their hoss, an' to eat the lunch mother had put up for 'em. Mother mixed up a batch

o' bread an' put it into the shay box when they started, an' told Huldý it would be just riz enough to bake by the time they'd got to Boston, an' 'twould be very handy to make it up into biscuit for tea. She put in a pat of butter 'cause she thought a little grain of sweet country butter would taste good to them city folks, an' she said she meant to have Mr. Jones's cousin know that Huldah had been used to good livin', if she had been fetched up on a farm.

"They come in sight o' Boston just 'bout sundown. Huldý took out her wallet to pay the toll on the mill-dam, an' to make sure that the ten dollars was safe, an' as she driv along over the bridge, she said she cast her eyes over the city an' thought to herself, 'Oh, that city little knows what a sweep it's goin' to have!'

"I tell you 'twan't often in them days that a gal had ten dollars to spend all to once. They put up at Mr. Jones's cousin's in Lynde Street. The city cousins was very perlite to Huldý, fer the family was quite pleased with Mr. Jones's

choice, an' airly the next mornin' Huldly started out to view the streets, an' to do her tradin'. She said she thought there must have been a great meetin' somewhere, there's so many folks in the street, an' the confusion upset her so she could hardly tell chany from common crockery. Cousin took her into Hanover Street, an' she soon settled upon some cups and saucers she thought proper for a minister's wife. There was white with a small black figger; she bought six cups an' saucers, a cream jug an' sugar bowl, an' six perserve plates, an' paid six dollars for 'em all.

"Cousin thought that Huldly could find a pootier ribbin in Washington Street, tho' it was gener'ly considered that goods was ruther dearer on Washington Street, but bein' that the ribbin was for the weddin' bunnet, an' it was only once in a lifetime, Huldly an' cousin both thought 'twould be wuth while to pay a leetle more for't. So, after goin' into all the gret stores where they kept ribbins, Huldly settled upon a white one with a purple sprig on't. She

bought three yards, an' paid four an' sixpence a yard for't, an' 'twas a beauty. When Huldý went t' meetin' the fust Sunday and walked up the broad aisle after Mr. Jones, I tell yer she looked like a picter beau. She bought a paper o' pins, an' five year arter she was married that same paper o' pins was in her upper bureau drawer, an' not a dozen pins was missin'; she considered it was settin' a good example in the parish to be savin' o' pins as well as o' larger things.

"I told 'er she made me think of old Deacon Bragg. Once when he went 'round to the cross-roads to settle his bill at Cragin's store, where he did his tradin', he found a paper of needles had been charged to him. He went home and asked his wife if she had bought a paper o' needles at Cragin's; she said, 'Husban', how could you think o' such a thing! I bought a paper o' needles when I was married forty year ago, an' they ain't half on 'em gone yet.'

"Well, the third day, when it was about time

for Huldy to get home, we all stood waitin' in the front door, an' we had begun to be a little oneasy for fear they'd broke down, or sumthin' had happened, when we looked up an' see the ole white hoss pooty well tuckered out, just a-climbin' the meetin'-house hill. I tell yer we breathed free when Huldy was safe in the house, an' we found there wasn't a piece o' the chany so much as cracked. Huldy herself was putty well jagged out, but then she said 'twas but once in a lifetime.

"The next mornin' all the nigh neighbors came in to hear about the journey, an' to see how she'd got along with her tradin'. Huldy had a complete faculty for tellin' about what she'd seen, an' Mis' Gibb said she'd just as leaves hear Huldy tell about a place, as to see it herself. They all thought that she had done well, and had got a complete settin' out. 'Twan't often 'n them days, that gals could go to Boston for their weddin' things.

"Bein' as Huldy was to marry a minister, an' go out o' town to live, everybody was oncom-

mon interested in the weddin', an' we had to make considerable preparation. The great spare north chamber had to be fixed up for Mr. Jones's family, an' we trimmed up the parlor with sparagrass and wintergreen. 'Twas a sight o' work to make the weddin' cake, and the neighbors all turned in an' helped stone the raisons an' beat the eggs, an' we had fust-rate luck with it.

"Huldy took one great loaf with her to Berrytown to pass 'round when the fust families called on her. Her weddin' gown was a white spotted muslin. It was made quite simple with a straight gathered skirt, an' a short waist tied with a cord an' tossle. She wore the gold beads that had belonged to the gret-aunt she was named fur, an' hanging on to 'em was a locket Mr. Jones give her with a lock o' his hair in't. The waist was cut a leetle low in front, for Huldy had a sweet, pooty neck, an' the sleeves cum about to the elbow. She held a bunch o' cinimen roses in her hand, an' when the old minister said solomnly, 'I

pronounce you man an' wife, an' what God hath joined together let no man put asunder,' Huldy's cheeks were as red as her roses, an' she did look pooty enough to kiss. Even Mr. Jones looked for a minnit as if there was a little risin' o' worldly pride in his heart. Pa lent 'em the hoss and shay to drive over to Berrytown, an' when they started off, the hull village turned out to see 'em go. Mr. Jones said to pa just as they was leavin' the old homestide, 'I feel it borne in upon my mind that I have made a wise choice, an' that your daughter will make a helpmeet in my great work.' Pa brushed away a tear with his coat-sleeve, for he set great store by Huldy, for all she had been so weakly, and says he, 'You're carryin' off as likely a gal as there is in Brampton, or any other town, Mr. Jones.'

"Huldy made, after all, a tol'able good manager, an' had a good deal o' faculty about makin' over Mr. Jones's clothes, an' her own; I believe she turned her black silk gown inside out, an' upside down, half a dozen times. Why, she

told me two dollars an' a half civered all her expenses for a year, an' that was the beaterree! I never could bring mine under five, do my best. She wore her weddin' bunnet seven year; and turned the ribbin every spring an' fall, till at last there was makin' up a barrel in the parish to send to 'the Illo' (Ohio) to some o' them missionaries, an' HuldY wanted to do her part, so she said to Mr. Jones that her best bunnit, though she had wore it consid'able time, was not all wore out, an' she fairly hated to part with it, but she s'posed it was her duty to set a good example to the people in the church, an' she guessed she would put the bunnit into the barrel. Mr. Jones remarked that it was a Christian duty to make sacrifices for the furtherance o' the gospel, an' the good o' the heathen."



## CHAPTER IX.

## VISITS TO THE SPRINGS.

OF all the stories Aunt Puah used to tell, nothing delighted "us girls" more than her account of visits to the Springs (Ballston Spa). She said, —

"When Huldý was about eighteen year old 'Bijah went to the Springs. It was a great affair in them days to go to the Springs. Nobody in Brampton had ever took so long a journey, and folks talked a good deal about 'Bijah's goin', but when he asked his Aunt Huldý to go with him, the whole village was up in eend. Ye see, Huldý was a proper pooty gal. She was weakly, an' everybody favored her. 'Bijah allers took to her more'n to any of his other aunts, 'cause she was nigher his age. Folks thought mother was crazy to think o' lettin' Huldý go off to them unknown parts, where,

they said, accordin' to accounts, there wuz wild Injuns, and they should never expect to see her alive ag'in. But mother was a master hand to have her own way, and she wanted her childun to have everything that was goin'. She knew 'twould be a great thing for Huldy, and for all the fam'ly, t' have her see so much o' the world; and, after considerin' upon 't awhile, she told 'Bijah she'd concluded 'twould be flyin' in the face o' Providence not to take up with such an offer, and she'd give her consent t' let Huldy go.

“Wal, the next thing was t' fit her out—it was most eal to fittin' out a gal t' be married. Of course she had her black silk gown, but we thought, bein' as 'Bijah's wife was so fash'nable, she orter have a change, so we bo't her a sarsnet. Mother got out the little hair trunk she had when she was married—it was quite good, though the moths got into 't one summer—and I told Huldy I'd lay in her things. So I pinned up her black silk in one o' mother's best towels, and laid it at the bottom o' the trunk

wi' some papers over it, an' the sarsnet on top. In the till I put her muslin cape, an' silk stock-in's, an' a couple o' artificial roses, one red an' one white un, that 'Bijah's wife had gi'n her, an' she never had a chance to wear. Huldry said, when I put the roses in, she'd wear 'em to dinner, the pink one day and the white the next, for she didn't mean 'Bijah's wife should be ashamed of her; and she had heerd that they dressed up every day as if they was goin' to meetin'.

“She wore her bombersette to journey in, an' we thought she was fixed out complete. She bore the ride very well — better 'n we expected. They stayed 't the Springs 'bout a week, but I was beat when she come home an' told us she never took her black silk out o' the trunk!

“Sez I, ‘Huldry, what in the name o' natur was the reason you didn't take that ere gown out? If there's ever a time when you wanted to look yer best, I should 'a' thought 'twould 'a' been when 'Bijah an' his wife took yer to the

“Sez she, ‘Sister Puah, I knew I never could fold up that gown as well as you did, an’ I thought ‘Bijah’s wife would think jest as much o’ me if I wore my bombersette in the mornin’ an’ my sarsnet in the afternoon. I jest slipped my roses into my hair, ‘cause they mostly wore flowers or somethin’ on their heads for dinner, an’ ‘Bijah’s wife never said a word about it.’

“‘Wal,’ sez I, ‘Huldy, I’ve a consate that ‘Bijah’s wife ‘ud be too perlite t’ say anything, no matter what she thought.’

“They was gone a month, for it took half o’ that time t’ go an’ come. When she got home, mother said the neighbors orter hear ‘bout her adventures, for Huldy was a great fav’rite in the village, an’ as ‘twas ‘bout time for her summer tea party, she might as well ask ‘em all then, an’ kill two birds wi’ one stone. O’ course they all come, an’ as soon as they was fairly seated, Huldy begun. She never was one to put on airs, but I must own she was a leetle set up when she got home from the Springs, an’

'twan't strange if she was a leetle galish, for nobody in Brampton had ever been to the Springs afore. Huldy had such a complete fac'ly for settin' out her journey and what she see while she was there, that the neighbors felt as if they'd raly like to go themselves. Em'-line Buck was amazin' cut up when Huldy come to the part o' her story where she didn't take out her black silk gown, 'cause she said she knew there wa'n't a better-fittin' gown there, if she did make it. Huldy said she s'posed 'twas faint enough not to take it out, but she knew she couldn't fold it again as complete as sister Puah did, and she thought she'd rather not.

"I never see the neighbors so stirred up! Mis' Smith declared that if she could git Mr. Smith started she'd go herself. Mis' Jones said they could go and git back afore harvestin' and picklin' come on; an' Mis' Gibbs said she wouldn't begrutch goin' without a new winter gown if she could see all Huldy see. The widder Brown thought 'twas a pity if Bramp-

ton folks couldn't journey some as well as the rest o' the world, an' bein' as 'twas more settled up there than they thought afore Huldry went, she didn't see why they couldn't jine together and start off as soon as hayin' was well out o' the way. Afore the tea party broke up, they agreed to set out as soon's they could git ready, if the men folks'd fall in. I tell ye, Mis' Smith eenamost give it up afore she could git Mr. Jo to say that he'd go; he allers was a dreadful off ox. Squire Gibbs was quite agreeable when it was fust mentioned, and Mr. Jones allers did jest what Mis' Jones said. These six an' widder Brown an' Mis' Davis — she that was a Buck — was the party.

“Wal, gals, I do s'pose thare never was such prep'rations and fixin's in Brampton afore. Huldry had told 'em they must take all their best things, 'cause it was jest like an ordination every day. She said the ladies wore their gowns draggin' consid'able on the floor, and the widder Brown said she allers did like the looks o' them draggin' gowns she'd seen in pic-

turs, but she didn't think she had a skirt she could led down, though she could turn her black silk away in the neck, an' put in her piece o' English thread lace, an' make it look as complete as anybody's. Mis' Davis said mebbe she hadn't orter mention it, but the widder Brown did perk up pooty lively.

"They started off in the stage one mornin' in August, an' the whole village was up 'n arms. That night, in prayer-meetin', Deacon Low prayed for them that was in danger o' bein' gi'n over to the vanities o' this perishin' world, an' we all knew well enough who he meant.

"They kalk'lated to be gone 'bout three weeks — that would give 'em a couple o' days to the Springs. When they got there they was pooty well tuckered out, and 'twas in the midst of a terrible thunder storm. They driv to a large tavern to put up. The rain was a-pourin', an' they was a-goin' in, when the landlord met 'em and told 'em they couldn't stay there, for every room was full. Mr. Jo wa'n't a bit scared, an' he spoke up, an' sez he, 'Well, we

*shall* stay here. We sha'n't go a step further in this rain t'-night.' The landlord said, 'You'll have to lay on the floor if you do stay.'

"'Twas finally settled that he should put beds in the parlor for the women folks, an' the men folks must take care o' themselves. The men was so orful tired they laid down on the benches in the entry, an' the women fixed themselves the best they could, an' was jest gittin' to sleep when Mis' Jo begun to pipe up so loud that everybody waked up, an' said,—

"'Wal, there's no more sleep for us t'-night if this 's goin' to be kep' up!' Finally Mis' Gibbs said to Mis' Davis, 'Do go, Mis' Davis, an' wake up Mis' Jo, an' ask her to turn on t'other side, an' stop that puffin' an' blowin', for we can't sleep a wink. She'll bear it from you, 'cause you're so pooty spoken.'

"At last they settled down an' got into a sound sleep jest afore daybreak, when a boy came an' routed 'em out, 'cause the parlor had to be fixed up for the company. The men folks had been up an hour or two when



the women went out into the entry an' found 'em.

"They wa'n't very smilin', for sleepin' on benches arter such a long journey, when they was used to good feather beds, was ruther aggravatin'. They all went out afore breakfast to taste o' the water down t' the Spring. Mr. Jo took a glass an' sipped a little, an' sez he, 'Wal, if you want t' drink that ere stuff you can; it tastes worse'n operdildoc!'

"They thought 'twas their duty to taste the water as long as they'd come so fer, but one taste was enough—they'd rather have the water in their old wells 't home than all the springs o' Ballston.

"After breakfast some o' the company went away, an' the landlord give the folks rooms up to the top o' the house. They got out their best gowns an' went to take a walk an' then had dinner. That afternoon they sot on the piazzer an' heerd the music play awhile, an' watched the city ladies trailin' their gowns over the floors. Mis' Gibbs said she thought

'twas a plaggy shame t' have them butiful silks a-switchin' round, wipin' up the dust. They'd seen so much they thought they'd go to bed airy that night an' git rested; but the next mornin' they agreed that as for sleepin' on such beds another night, they'd be hanged fust! Why! the beds was harder'n a pine board; so they all started for home.

"The stage left very airy, and they was all on board except Mr. Jo, who couldn't be found. Mis' Jo got terrible stirred up, an' she told the stage-driver when he asked fer her fare, sez she, 'Don't you ask *me* for fare! I won't pay you a cent till you find my husband.'

"All the women had cap-boxes in their hands, an' the stage was pooty well filled up by the time they got fairly in. The driver said he couldn't be hendered no longer, an' they started off. Mis' Jo was in a terrible fluster, and declared she'd git out if Mr. Jo didn't ketch up with 'em afore they got to the fust turn in the road. Jest as they was goin' 'round the corner, they heerd somebody callin', an' they looked out,

an' there was Mr. Jo a-runnin' an' hollerin' to 'em to stop. Mis' Jo put her head out o' the winder and see him comin', and sez she to the stage-driver, 'Do you stop, or every one on us 'll git out o' this stage!' Soon as he come within hearin', Mis' Jo sez to him, 'Wal! you've sarved us a pooty trick! What on airth have you been doin'?' An' sez he, 'Gor-ri! don't say nothin'. I've had trouble enough. I jest went 'round the corner to git a leetle tobacker to start with, an' when I come back the stage had gone.' Mis' Jo was satisfied, an' they all settled down an' got home without any more fuss. When they arriv', I tell ye, gals, we all had a pooty lively time. There wa'n't nothin' talked about but that ere journey an' visit all that fall an' winter. The widder Brown pieced down her best gown, and went to the Thanksgivin' ball wi' the skirt a-trailin' on the floor. The colonel o' the Brampton Militia said he'd resign his position afore he'd dance with a woman that had her gown a-wipin' up the dust every step she took."

## CHAPTER X.

## QUEER PEOPLE.

NOT far from the meeting-house stood a little red house with the paint mostly washed off. Its bare yard was enclosed by a tumble-down fence; its front door had lost every trace of paint; and its windows were decorated here and there with bits of old calico and patches of putty stuffed into the broken panes. There was not even a cluster of Bouncing Bets to relieve the utter barrenness of the place, and only now and then a stunted dandelion struggled up through the reluctant grass. Mis' Hanscom had no eye for beauty, and no leisure for worldly adornments either for her house or her person. All the time except what she was obliged to give to keep soul and body together was spent in reading her Bible and going to meeting. Every worldly interest was subservi-

ent to these. She would often take her washing and baking to a neighbor's house for the purpose of conversing upon Bible topics. She could repeat Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, but the good woman was utterly ignorant of everything that pertained to worldly comfort, and oftentimes the dinner was forgotten, and the supper carried far into the evening, because Mis' Hanscom was lost in spiritual meditations.

She was a small woman, with little squinting eyes, a wrinkled face, and a placid, sanctimonious smile. Her thin lips were always twisted a little to one side, and her head hung over one shoulder while she moved about with a lackadaisical indifference to the pomps and vanities of the world. Sunday was the great day of the week with her, when all earthly affairs were trodden under foot. We girls used to watch to see Mis' Hanscom come into church. She always struck an attitude in the entry, not from personal vanity but from pious emotion. It was as if she thought an unworldly expression and a

slow pious gait should be assumed when going into the house of the Lord. Her head was a little more on one side and her mouth a little more twisted, her old straw bonnet was slightly awry, and with her large palm-leaf fan that swayed slowly to and fro, keeping time to her solemn measured advance, she moved up the broad aisle to the very last seat in the meeting-house.

This studied entrance was the more noticeable because the congregation faced the door, the pulpit being in front. Her muscles never relaxed, her expression never varied, her fan never ceased its solemn motion till she reached her seat at the head of the pew which was against the wall, between the windows that looked out into the old graveyard. In this graveyard she spent her noonings, walking among its grassy mounds, and meditating on the end of her earthly life, which end she kept so constantly in view, she could never seem to see that she had any active duties in the present.

She always spoke of herself as a "poor dyin' creeter," and went about as if she were attending her own funeral. The simple food she had was prepared on Saturday, so that the Sabbath need not be encroached upon. The beans and brown-bread were consigned to the brick oven on a Saturday night, and the family helped themselves as hunger demanded. The dishes were left over to be washed, and Mis' Hanscom might be seen on Monday morning seated at the sink,—for she always sat down to do everything,—with a complacent pious solemnity on her face, her hands dropping into her lap between the washing of each cup and saucer, as she meditated upon the sermon, and, with a deep sigh at the sinfulness of the poor worms of the dust, applied the passages of reproof to her neighbors. She was very weakly and "quite bilious," she used to say, and a favorite expression of hers was, "Nobody is so apt to ketch cold as poor human nater."

Mis' Hanscom was the agent in Brampton for the Moral Reform Society, and she consid-

ered it a part of her pious mission to call on all the families in the village to solicit subscriptions. Aunt Puah had several times contributed, and had become a little impatient with Mis' Hanscom's long-drawn-out discourses upon the duty of giving, and she said to her, "I'll give you ten cents for the Moral Reform this year, if you'll never call on me agin."

Mis' Hanscom's yearly contribution had been five cents for many years, and a dollar was the sum total collected in Brampton for this charity. The "widder" Brown, who was not in sympathy with this society, remarked sarcastically that "it would take few such contributions as this to keep up any association!"

Aunt Puah said she didn't care nothin' about Moral Reform, but she'd ruther give ten cents any day than to be pestered with Mis' Hanscom. This call for the Moral Reform Society was made on Monday morning.

It was a favorite remark of Aunt Puah's, concerning any one who was deficient in energy and thrift, that he or she was "born in the dead



o' the night." And as she saw Mis' Hanscom's shambling figure moving down the yard where the sweet, white clothes were hanging on the line, — for the thrifty housewives of Brampton would as soon have thought of disregarding the Sabbath as of allowing Monday to pass without doing the family washing, and Aunt Puah always kept an eye on her neighbors, to see which one of them would have the washing out earliest, — she said to Pa, "I vum! I'm glad I was born in the mornin' instid o' the dead o' the night, as Mis' Hanscom was."

There was another old woman in Brampton whom Aunt Puah considered a notable example of "dead o' the night" people — Beulah Warfield, who wandered about the town asking one neighbor for "a little piece of meat jest to remember you by," and another for a few potatoes or a cabbage "jest to remember you by."

This poor old woman spent her days in roaming over the hills and fields of Brampton, and her nights in the little hovel by the woodside, which she called home. She was happy, and

she harmed nobody. The little children followed poor old Beulah, and shared their few plums and peppermints with her, as they sat on the low bench by the hovel door and heard her childish babble. Sometimes she would give them a few berries "jest to remember her by," and sometimes amuse them by singing in her sharp falsetto, snatches of old songs she had learned in her childhood. So she lived and died serving perhaps her day and generation, her very helplessness and innocence appealing to the kindly impulses of the children.

Mis' Hanscom had a brother whose mental capacity was about equal to her own. But his instinct led him in entirely opposite ways. He was the village straggler and the village wag, the butt of the boys and the terror of the girls, as he wandered about, sleeping in barns and sheds wherever the night found him, and begging his bread and cider—for cider was the chief delight of his life—from house to house. He was never known to do an honest day's work. He would, in the season, pick berries,

or dig flag-root and sell it for a few pennies; and he had a certain intuition about herbs, and would gather sassafras and wintergreen and catnip, and bring them to the doctor with the request that he might swap them for a mug of cider. Sometimes for a mug of cider he would go two or three miles to do an errand for a neighbor, and would often improve such opportunities to steal from some garden on his way a rose-bush or a peony, and sell it in the village. He never entered a church, and he used to call his sister under-witted because she went to meeting so much. Neither reproof nor expostulation had any effect upon him. He was always in rags and tatters, and his only ambition in life was to get as much cider as he wished.

In his utter disregard of appearances, "Old Jake," as he was called, was quite unlike another of the strange characters of Brampton, Billy Buck, a town pauper, with the most lofty ideas of his own consequence, and who considered himself an orator. He would roam about the village making speeches in the most high-

flown language whenever he could find on the corners of the streets or in the little shops two or three people together. If he could not get hearers elsewhere, he would stand before the corn-fields, and for an hour address the waving stalks in the most grandiloquent language, and with the most impassioned gestures, apparently as well satisfied as if the rustling leaves had been a sea of upturned faces.

He would even become so excited with his own oratory that he would wipe the tears from his eyes and exclaim in loud tones, "Glory to Gideon! Glory to Gideon, my hearers!"

His eloquence had no relation to the subject in hand, he would burst forth with the most remarkable expressions, calling his hearers ignoble pedestrians, ignominious aristocrats, aboriginal unbelievers, unsophisticated hypocrites, or any other high-sounding terms that happened to come into his head. Poor old Billy lived and died in the almshouse and was buried in a pauper's grave. He had the idea that he himself was a patrician of the first order, and perhaps

he was more happy through his long life than many a one born to the purple.

There was a strange old man in Brampton — strange in that he regarded everything that happened to him as lucky. He was as poor as poverty, but he saw that poverty was best for him, because nobody could tell what he might have been tempted to do if he were rich.

As it was, he said, there was two things that never agreed with him — “sawing wood and hard work. I hain’t nothin’ t’ worry ’bout, and ary one o’ my neighbors would lend a helpin’ hand in case o’ need.” If he was laid up with a long sickness in winter he said to the doctor, “Why, I tell Polly” (his patient wife) “it’s mighty lucky my sickness has happened in winter, ’cause if it was in summer, I might lose a good many jobs o’ work.”

Old Smith fell one day when he was driving a heavy load of wood, and the wheel went over his leg and broke it. The neighbors wondered what he would find lucky about this. As soon as he could speak, he said in a cheerful tone,



OLD BILLY BUCK.



"I swan! it's pleggy lucky my team was on level ground; it would have been so much worse if I had been going down hill, and my wood had all tumbled off; and then again it's lucky it's my leg instead o' my neck!" So old Smith went through life, always looking on the lucky side.

To complete the play of life in the little village, there must be a jester. The jester of Brampton was a poor, half-witted fellow, Jack Downs by name. He was a happy "do-nothing," whose business in life it was to make merry both old and young, and the church seemed to be his favorite stage to enact comedies. One Sunday he sat in the front seat of the gallery, and with a pin fashioned into a fish-hook, he was in the act of letting it down upon the wig of an old man, who sat just beneath him, when the minister stopped in his sermon, and, in tones of stern reproof, called out to the offender. Still going on with his operations, he coolly replied, "Mind your preachin'! Mind your preachin'! I'm a fisher o' men."



On another Sunday, Jack Downs filled his pockets with decayed apples, and went in sober and respectable fashion to church, and took his usual seat in the high front gallery. When the preacher had reached the "tenthly" in his sermon, and the elderly people had become a little drowsy, Jack drew carefully from his pocket a soft apple, and at a moment when the tithing man's attention was directed to an unruly boy on the opposite side of the gallery, he aimed his apple at the head of the nodding deacon just at the time of the minister's most solemn words of application.

Of course it was not in poor human nature to look solemn under such circumstances, and it must be confessed there was not grace enough to keep down the risibles of the pious old people, or to suppress the giggle of the younger ones, when Jack spoke out in loud tones, "Parson, you mind your preachin'. I'll keep the devils awake."

A number of peculiar men in Brampton went under the name of the "Smith Tribe." The

heads or leaders of this tribe were five brothers "Smith," — Joe, Aaron, Bill, Moses, and Nat. They held themselves quite aloof from the village folk, and had forms and ceremonies peculiar to themselves. Nat, the oldest, was called "God Smith" and he always wore on his hat a band with the words, *I am God*. All the tribe consulted him even about the minutest details. They were opposed to all existing forms of religion, but had their own strange forms, which they constantly practised. They read the Bible, but interpreted it according to their own views.

One custom among them was to march around the old meeting-house seven times, once a week, blowing a trumpet, with "God Smith" at the head of the procession. They did not believe in marriage ceremonies. The funeral service they performed among themselves and never permitted a minister to take part in any of their exercises. They allowed only one child to a family.

One strange custom was, *never* to turn back.

If for any reason they found it necessary to return to the place from which they started, they would go any distance round rather than turn back. For a year or more before "God Smith" died, he was never known to speak to any one.

The eccentric and talented Hannah Adams once taught school in Brampton, and the old people to this day like to tell stories of her odd, absent-minded pranks.

It was from Brampton in the old stage-coach that she started on a journey to Boston with her "great bundle, little bundle, bandbox, and bag," and it happened that the only other passenger in the stage was a divinity student who had been studying with Mr. Howe. The young man counted it great luck that he should have fallen in with the distinguished author, and he tried to engage her in conversation, but she only answered his questions in monosyllables, and repeated "great box, little box, bandbox, and bag;" and this she kept repeating at short intervals throughout the journey, much to the disappointment of the embryo minister.

The only method of noting the lapse of time in the old schoolhouse was by means of an hour-glass, and this the children used to turn up or down as suited their wishes when Hannah was lost in some abstract, metaphysical subject, and wholly oblivious of their presence, to say nothing to their conduct, — and thus get out of school an hour earlier. Aunt Puah used to say to any girl who was uncommonly fond of her books, and spent more time over them than she thought desirable, when she ought to be at her “spinnin’,” — “Come, Harnna Ardams, you have lost time enough over that ere book ; if you read so much you won’t know no more than she does, an’ she never has her wits about her. Maybe she’s got intellec’ enough, but for my part I druther have a little grain o’ common sense than to have so much intellec’.”

## CHAPTER XI.

THE AMUSEMENTS AND OCCUPATIONS OF THE  
CHILDREN.

CHILDREN in those days employed their leisure in a very different way from that to which the young people of the present time are accustomed. Picnics, parties, and the numberless devices for entertainment that are common in our day were never thought of.

Sometimes a little girl was told if she would be very good and do her *stent* (stint) she should go to her grandmother's grave on a pleasant afternoon, and sometimes as a reward of merit she was told she might go to the "good doctor" and have a tooth pulled. Dentists were quite unknown in those days, and the instruments for extracting teeth were constructed somewhat like a ploughshare, but the good doctor was so kindly in his ways that the little

children never feared to go to him, and the penny which he always had ready was a panacea for the pain of the tooth-pulling, or the bitter draught which he administered from his saddle-bags.

Apothecaries and pharmacies were not known in Brampton, and all the drugs were carried by the "good doctor" in the box of his little gig, and in his well-worn saddle-bags.

Opodeldoc, elixir-pro., salts and senna, paregoric, castor-oil, and other like precious nostrums were the medicines dealt out in those days, and the children were apt to feel that they would as soon die as swallow the nauseous doses.

The "good doctor" had a little white curly dog which he used to promise to every sick boy in Brampton if he would take his medicine like a man, and if the boy remembered to claim the promise after the opodeldoc had done its work, he was reminded that the dog was a dangerous plaything for a boy, and might bite him; so the same little white curly dog an-

swered for a bribe many a year, and every boy in Brampton felt that he had a claim upon it, and was just as well satisfied as if he owned it, for they all felt sure that some day they would come into full possession of the promised little dog.

The occupations of the little girls varied with the seasons. Spinning so many knots for the older girls, and knitting so many times round on coarse yarn stockings, was the "stent" for the smaller ones.

The little girls were seated on straight high-backed chairs, with their feet dangling in front of the great fireplace, where the iron dogs held the blazing logs, and under the stern gaze of the mother or grandmother, whose busy fingers never flagged in the constant task of keeping the boys' trousers patched and the girls' pinafores and pantalets in order; — there they must sit till the "stent" was finished.

If by chance a neighbor dropped in to talk about the weather, or the cat woke from her doze to play with the ball of yarn which the

little girl had purposely let slip from her calico bag to challenge pussy to a little frolic, — anything, anything to break the dull monotony of the long-drawn-out hours, when the ticking of the old clock, and the crackling of the logs, and the purring of the cat were the only sounds she heard, — the little girl was reminded that her knitting-work was very “tendful,” or that she was in “no danger of melting her knitting-needles,” or that she would “never have to be buried under the *gallars*” (gallows).

It was a queer saying among the old people that “if folks killed themselves with hard work they would have to be buried under the gallars.” It was very humiliating to a child, if she lagged in her task, to hear some one call out, “*You’ll* never be buried under the gallars.”

While the girls were spinning and knitting, the boys were piling wood in the adjoining sheds, or shelling corn, and in summer pulling weeds, picking stones, or gathering berries. The rocky soil of Brampton was especially adapted



to the growth of wild strawberries — cultivated strawberries were unknown, and huckleberries grew in every pasture where there was room enough between the rocks for the bushes to take root.

All the spending money the children had was earned by picking the huckleberries in the long hot summer days, in the dry unshaded pastures, and selling them to the market-men, who took them to Boston and shared with them the scanty profits. How tired they were as they came slowly wending their way home at set of sun, with their pails filled with berries, their quart measures dangling at their sides, their gowns torn and their shoes dusty, their faces burned and their hands scratched !

All day long they had picked the berries, bending their tired backs over the low bushes between the rocks, and resting only to take a scanty lunch under the shade of some lonely tree or overhanging rock, where the blue, buzzing flies and the hungry mosquitoes kept high carnival, and the little girls declared that the very

same big flies came back every year to share their lunch, to buzz about their ears, and to bite their hands.

The winter gowns and shoes were bought with the money that came from selling the berries.

Occasionally an ancient maiden aunt made a rag doll for some little girl, and Aunt Puah used to say it wouldn't be wicked to worship that ere doll, for twan't made "in the likeness of anything in heaven above or the airth beneath." How the children in these days of Paris dolls would laugh over those rag babies ! They would afford a great deal of fun to the little girls who have French dolls with golden curls and winking eyes, and wardrobes fashioned after Worth's wonderful garments, and trunks, and carriages, and toilet articles, and parasols, and jewelry.

Laugh as you will, little girls, these rag babies, that were so fearfully and wonderfully made, were just as dear to their mothers as yours are to you, and they were much more

easily brought up. They were stuffed with cotton or the refuse wool from the carding and spinning, and were very flat and flimsy. Their cheeks were stained with cranberry juice and their eyes made of little black beads; they had inked mouth and eyebrows; their noses were pinched together with a few well-directed stitches, looking like a small wart on the flat surface of their faces, and they had tow hair.

Their gowns were made of blue and white calico, with pantalets to match. The clothes were stitched through and through the soft bodies, and never needed to be changed. The sun-bonnets were sewed firmly on, so that when they were swung up into the tree the bonnet should not be left among the apple boughs.

They could be put easily to bed in their soap-box beds, with hay pillows, without fear of tumbling their calico frocks, and be taken through a severe fit of sickness without fear of soiling the frocks, and they could adjust their supple bodies to the corn-stalk chairs far more readily than the stiff-jointed dolls that came

from Paris. They had an expression so grim and melancholy that the children, if they had not been full of that tenderness common to all mothers, that partial pride which makes one's own always beautiful, would have thought them hobgoblins or "wild Injun" babies.

But it was not every child who could have such dolls as these. Where there was no maiden aunt or doting grandmother to fashion these wonderful creatures, the little girl had to content herself with a small blanket or an old shawl pinned up into the similitude of a live baby, and solace herself with its companionship. The dolls had to sit circumspectly beside their mothers until the "stent" was done, and it was only a little time the children could spend in play, for they must take part in the household affairs; after the "stent" was done, the dinner dishes must be wiped and piled up on the dresser in the corner of the kitchen, and the basket filled with chips ready to boil the tea-kettle for supper. To be sure, it took a great deal of "make-believe" to carry on the every-

## BRAMPTON SKETCHES.

day life, because the dolls must do whatever their mothers did; they must be tied into the swing in the apple-tree, they must feed the calf and the chickens, they must hunt eggs under the mangers and in the hay-lofts and in every corner where a retiring hen could possibly think of leaving an egg.

Play-houses were built on flat rocks, with little stones, and furnished with bits of broken crockery. A pretty piece of bright-colored china was a great "find," and was far more prized than are the expensive toys that are wasted upon children nowadays.

Such were the pastimes of the children of Brampton long ago, and they were as happy perhaps with their homely playthings as are the children of our times who have more spent for toys every year than it cost to support a family in that simple neighborhood.

The long winter evenings were diversified for the lads and lassies by an occasional spelling-match and singing-school. (Aunt Puah called them "singin' lectures.")

These evening entertainments were held usually in the "deestricht" schoolhouse, and they afforded the only opportunity for the young people to be by themselves. In the small houses of the village the families always gathered around the kitchen fire after the work of the day was done. The grandmother dozed over her knitting in the corner, in front of the great oven door, — the baking was done in large brick ovens set in the wall near the fireplace, — the little round candle-stand stood in front of the fire, with a tallow dip on it, and this, with the blazing brushwood cut from the apple-trees, gave all the light there was in the little kitchen, which was adorned with winter squashes and bunches of dry herbs, hung all along the low ceiling.

The tired old father nodded over his almanac or his weekly paper; the mother bustled about in and out of the pantry, busy about a thousand and one things which always fall to the mother, and that only her deft hand can do; the children frolicked with the cat or teased the dog

on the floor behind the old settle in the corner, and so there really was no place where a bashful lad could whisper a tender word to the elder daughter without being overheard by all the family, and the spelling-bees and singing-schools were a great blessing to the young folks. All the courtships in Brampton were begun and consummated in the winter evenings coming from those innocent little gatherings, where the simple lads and lassies had piped together their rude, homely tunes, and exchanged shy, friendly glances, and where perhaps the lassies had not spelled their best,

“Because, because, you see, I love you,  
And did not want to go above you.”

In the lingerings by the wayside and the tarryings on the doorstep in the light of the cold winter moon, there were many tender words spoken, and solemn vows exchanged, and many a good-night kiss stolen before the pretty girl, her cheeks painted by the frost, and rosy with the touch of her rustic lover's lips, went blushing into the kitchen to say “good-

night," and to dream of her joy in her little low chamber, where the same moon stole in that had witnessed their plighted vows on the doorstep.

"I can't remember what they said,  
'Twas nothing worth a song or story;  
Yet that rude path by which they sped  
Seemed all transformed and in a glory.

The snow was crisp beneath their feet,  
The moon was full, the fields were gleaming;  
By hood and tippet sheltered sweet,  
Her face with youth and health was beaming.

Perhaps 'twas boyish love, yet still,  
O listless woman, weary lover!  
To feel once more that fresh, wild thrill  
I'd give — but who can live youth over?"<sup>1</sup>

Baby carriages would have been considered a great extravagance in Brampton.

Raisin-boxes and soap-boxes were converted into wagons for the babies and drawn by the little six-year-old nurse to relieve the mothers while the cheese-making and the butter-making, the washing and ironing, the baking and

<sup>1</sup> Stedman.



brewing, the mending and making were all done by her one pair of hands.

The one-year-old baby was tucked into the small box-wagon, and the happy three-year-old tagged on behind, while the little nurse, entrusted with the care, and laden with her lunch-basket stored with bread and butter, and a bottle of milk for the baby, gravely dragged the little cart to some pleasant spot by the roadside, or to some adjoining pasture, where a friendly tree afforded shade and shelter.

Here they often spent hours, and sometimes the little nurse would fall asleep with the babies, and when she woke, keen would be the pangs of her Brampton conscience, educated in the belief of total depravity and awful responsibility, as she thought of what *might* have happened if some old "*shack*" (straggler) or roving "Injun" had stolen her charge while she slept.

The children grew up from their earliest years with an overpowering sense of the terrible wickedness of their own hearts, and the dread-

ful danger of departing in the least degree from the "decrees" as they were taught in the Sunday-school and from the pulpit. The doctrine of "personal election," the doctrine of "total depravity," the perseverance of the Saints, and "the eternity of hell-torments," and the "duties of morality,"<sup>1</sup>—these constituted the formula of belief in the church at Brampton, in the early part of this century.

The children who were naturally sensitive and conscientious were often driven into a frenzy of alarm by the gloom and sternness and hopelessness that through this teaching over-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Howe's Century Sermon.

The following extract from the same sermon will illustrate the severe way in which the minister felt called upon to administer reproof to his flock :

"Your habits are so firmly fixed, that no reformation is to be expected during my ministry ; and, indeed, it would require more power in the Deity to effect it, than it did to create the world. For when he created the world he had only to say : 'Let there be light,' and there was light.

"He had no opposition. But, to bring you to a sense of justice and equity, he must overcome your private, personal attachment to your own *supposed* worldly interest ; and that would require more *power* than it did to create the world ! And, beside, my life is so far spent that, should you reform, it is doubtful whether it would produce any very beneficial effects on my labors. I mean to tell the whole truth, without partiality or respect of persons."

hung their lives. Death was invested with every conceivable horror, and the tolling of the funeral bell sent a thrill of dismay into the hearts of the children, because they were taught that God hated them and that they hated God, and if they died in an "unregenerate state" they would surely go to hell.

A thunderstorm struck terror to every child's heart, and often the family was called together and prayers were offered to avert the terrible stroke which perhaps threatened them on account of some sin they might have committed. The little children quaked with fear, and huddled together in the middle of the room, calling to mind every smallest misdeed, and believing that the thunder and lightning were sent as a punishment, and that the next flash of lightning might consign them to that dismal place of which they constantly heard.

They were not taught the loving messages of Him who said, "Let the little ones come unto Me." They were never taught that the tender, loving, forgiving Christ loved them,

and that they should try to serve Him in pureness of living and truth, and follow the blessed steps of His most holy life, and that He was far more ready to forgive when they did wrong, and were sorry for it, than their fathers or mothers were. They were constantly taught, if they committed one sin, however small, they were guilty of breaking God's law, and were just as wicked as if they had broken all the laws of the decalogue; and that God would never look upon them with the least degree of compassion until they were converted and renewed. At the same time they were taught that God chose some from the beginning to be lost, and some to be saved.

What conversion and regeneration meant was as great a mystery to a child as were the doctrines themselves to their elders, no two of whom ever fully agreed as to the exact meaning of these terms, and not one in a hundred of those who became members of the church, whether old or young, had the least understanding of the meaning and significance of

the doctrines they were compelled to say they believed — “in the presence of God and these witnesses.”

The following story gives an idea of the rigid test that was applied to candidates for church-membership, whether they were as wise as doctors of divinity, or as blameless of doctrines as little children.

One poor, honest old woman, who was ignorant of words and phrases and doctrines, but who had a sweet, loving heart, and wished to obey the command of her Saviour, whom she dearly loved, “Do this in remembrance of Me,” was once brought before the deacons and elders to be examined as to her fitness for membership in the church. She was asked if she believed in “predestination,” “perseverance of the Saints,” “justification by faith,” and “the eternity of punishment.”

To all of these questions the simple, honest old woman answered, “I don’t know, I don’t know. I only know I love *Him*.”

At length, after spending much time in the

examination, the deacons decided that she did not know enough of the doctrines to be admitted to the church. With tears streaming down her withered cheeks, she rose to leave ; with tottering steps she reached the door, and, with her heart bursting with love to her compassionate Lord and her voice choking with emotion, she turned to the deacons and said, " I *cannot* speak for Him, but I can die for Him."

A young girl of exceptional intelligence who had enjoyed unusual advantages, and who could not take tradition or the faith of others, however much revered, came before the committee of the church for examination, with as happy a heart as Christ, youth, and gladness could give her. She had read the promises of her Lord for *herself*, and she took Him at His word. Her heart was aglow with Christ's love, and she rejoiced in all the fair and beautiful things in the world, as well as in His spiritual mercies. Her trust and hope could not be saddened into fear and doubt by any distrust or conventionality of men, and when the examining com-

mittee asked this young, bright, happy girl just the same question that they would have asked an old man who was weary of life, "Are you willing to give up *all* the pleasures of the world?" she replied with cheerful simplicity and honesty,—"I enjoy life *very much*; it is full of pleasure now that I know Christ's forgiving love, but if you will change the form of your question, I can answer it, perhaps, to your satisfaction. If any pleasure ever comes *between* my duty to Christ, and my soul, I think He will help me to renounce it for Him."

When asked if she understood the "decrees," her answer was,—"In all matters of my religious faith the settlement must lie between my own soul and God."

The old men shook their heads, and their souls were troubled. That loving our blessed Lord meant living more pure and holy lives, being more kind and just and true, unselfish and forgiving,—living more as He lived when He walked our earth,—this was never taught.

It was always "the wrath of God on the children of disobedience."

Of course, parental affection and the natural optimism of human nature tempered somewhat these extreme views, but the terrors of the law, expressed in those fearful words "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, fire and brimstone, and endless torment," were constantly preached; and every hour of the day and every act of life felt their influence. The love of God was made subordinate to His justice, and the hopes and promises of the Gospel were rarely dwelt upon.

On the part of the parents there was constant repression, and the love of the children for their fathers and mothers was mingled with fear and awe, so that the pleasant confidences which should exist between parents and children, and the expressions of affection which sweeten life, were very rare.

"Children should be seen and not heard," was the common family motto.

Any word of approval or commendation was



regarded as tending to foster vanity, and the highest praise ever bestowed upon a young person was expressed by an old man whose son had accomplished some heroic act. When he was asked if he did not feel proud of his son, he replied, — “I can’t say that I don’t feel *some satisfaction*, but I hope I don’t indulge in any feeling of *pride*, for that, I should consider, would be very sinful.”

## CHAPTER XII.

## VILLAGE WAYS.

THE great event of the springtime in the village was the soap-making, which took days of preparation and much hard work. First, the leach must be set outside the kitchen door, and the water poured over the ashes, until the lye was strong enough to bear up an egg; the almanac was studied, then the course of the moon, and the tide, must be watched, because the soap would never come unless the moon were in the right quarter, and it was flood-tide. At the auspicious moment the large iron kettle which was only used on such important occasions was hung upon the crane, and great was the interest that gathered around the fireplace, for the family supply of soap for a year depended upon the result of that boiling kettle.

Next came the house-cleaning, and the shaking of the best spare-room carpet, — in the very few houses where there were carpets, — and the removing out of sight everything from the fireplaces, so that, whatever might be the temperature, nothing could induce a thorough New England housekeeper to remove from the “best-room” fireplace the tops of asparagus with which it was filled early in May, not to be displaced in any event until November. These stirring events were the topics of conversation through all the springtime. “Mrs. Smith, did you have a good day to shake your carpet?” “There wasn’t nigh as much dust in mine as there was last year, an’ I told husban’ I had a consate it was because we had had so much rain this spring.”

There was a little time in midsummer when the social life of the village was at its height, and the best families (for there were best families in Brampton) exchanged afternoon teas. The ladies in the best families each had one black silk gown; indeed, no lady could be admitted

into the first circle without a black silk gown. True, it might have been turned inside out and upside down several times, but to be truly respected in Brampton a black silk gown was absolutely necessary. Aunt Puah's nephew had presented her with a black silk umbrella; this was an uncommon badge of respectability, and Aunt Puah never took it out when there was a cloud to be seen, because, she said, "I wouldn't 'ave that 'ere umbrella wet fer nothin'; I 'ave had it a number o' year, an' I alwa's mean to keep it, so that, in case I should be took away, it'd be jest as good fer 'Bijah's wife as it was when he give it to me."

The ladies took a nap after dinner, and calculated to be ready to start by half-past one at the latest. With a small muslin shawl over their shoulders and a large green calash covering their company cap—for a cap was essential to propriety then, no matter how abundant the hair—they set forth with the company knitting-work. Aunt Puah remarked on one of these occasions, "Lor' sakes alive, I never expect to

finish this 'ere stockin'; I allers mean to keep it for company knittin'."

The hostess always stood in the front door to welcome her guests. Aunt Puah said she had "heerd 'twas the fashion in some places to have a bell to ring at the door, but for her part she shouldn't wait for no bell to ring; when she see a neighbor comin', she should go to the door to meet 'em."

The hostess, after greeting her guests, sat a few minutes with them in the best front room, and then asked to be excused. The remaining time was spent in baking the biscuits, boiling the tea-kettle, and laying the table, for there were only a few families in all Brampton where "hired help" was kept. With a serious air, tea was announced at five o'clock. A large glass of toddy was passed as soon as they were all seated, and the tongues kept time with the knitting-needles until the hostess went to each lady and said, "Our tea is now on the table; shall I take your work?" The work-bags were then gathered and deposited on the best-room

table, and the ladies walked out into the clean, sanded kitchen, where the tea-table was spread opposite the open door that led into the little garden. If it was not haying time, the husbands would drop in just long enough to take a cup of tea. Notes were then compared as to who had the earliest crop of peas and who could boast the highest corn. The doctor's wife remarked that Mrs. Howe had "a beautiful mess of safren and sage, and she should know where to send the doctor in case he wanted any." He made great use of these herbs in bilious diseases.

The ladies discussed the jelly-making; this was a subject of great interest, and the question went the rounds — "Did you have good luck with your jelly?"

"Did it jell well?"

"Mine was a leetle grain darker color than 'twas last year, an' I'm jealous 'twas 'cause I picked the currants a day later; it makes all the difference in the world about the day o' the month an' the time in the day that you pick the currants."

The every-day living of the people was very simple, consisting mostly of the products of their small farms; but on these occasions the table literally groaned under the weight of the cakes and pies, preserves and tarts and jellies. Everything must be tasted, and if Mis' Jones declined, Mis' Smith felt quite hurt, for "that cake was made from a new resate she had jest got from a cousin of hers in Boston. It was said to have been brought over from England, and it was one the nobility used."

Mis' Jones said she would taste a little grain of it just to try it, for she had a new "resate" herself she would like to send to Mis' Smith. Mis' Hunt pronounced the currant jam the nicest she had ever tasted, and the "widder" Brown said the "jell" was a beautiful color.

Mis' Crain, upon being urged to take a third cup of tea, declared she couldn't decline, for it was "the completest-flavored Old Hyson she had tasted for a long time, and she wondered where Mis' Howe bought it."

Mis' Howe said she was glad if the ladies

enjoyed her tea, for she had the old white hoss tackled up into the shay, and drove over to Berrytown a-purpose to get half a pound of that tea, for she had a consate that the flavor was better than any she could get in Brampton, and she didn't have to pay a cent more for 't; she hoped the ladies would excuse her biscuits, for she was a good deal put to't about her yeast this week, and they didn't rise as well as common.

Tea being over, the husbands departed to look after their cows, and the wives rolled up the company knitting-work with the little quill sheath, and each one declared she'd had "a very han'some supper, and a complete visit; she should be obleeged to hurry home to set the milk for her cheese, and to put the churn in soak for churning early to-morrow morning."

Mis' Low remarked, upon leaving, that she'd been trying all summer to invite her neighbors in to tea, "but one thing after another had hendered; she did hope she should be able to invite 'em before the fall work came on, and have it off her mind."



A funeral was an event of importance in the village. The meeting-house bell always announced the departure of a soul by a solemn tolling. The sex was given by the striking of the bell, once three for a child, twice three for a woman, and three times three for a man; and then the age was pealed out dolorously, and every man, woman, and child stopped, whatever the stress of work, and counted slowly and solemnly the age of the departed neighbor, and each one began to plan how the mourning family could be best helped through the waiting days until the slow procession should follow the time-worn hearse to the little burying-place under the shadow of the meeting-house, where for many Sundays the neighbors would gather at the nooning to talk of the kindly deeds and the pleasant ways of the one who had finished his labors and was resting beneath the fresh sod which friendly hands had placed over his earthly remains.

The first thing to be done was to gather all the black "bunnits" and shawls in the neigh-

borhood and take them to the house of mourning for the use of the family. The mourners were cautioned to be very careful not to let their tears fall upon the crape veils, because briny tears would leave a spot upon crape which could not be easily removed, and if the widow could just think to wipe off the tears before they dropped upon the crape she should be perfectly welcome to wear the "bunnet" and veil to the funeral and the first Sunday after, though it would be a deprivation not to see how the mourners appeared when the note was read in meetin' asking for the prayers of the congregation, yet she was willing to accommodate.

There were those in every village who could never hear of a death without an irresistible desire to attend the funeral. Aunt Puah said "sister Betsy always wanted to see if the corpse looked natural, even though she had never seen the individual in life," and it was a matter of great interest to see how the mourners would appear.

"Betsy come home one day from a funeral

over on Bear Hill, and she said the sexton that managed that 'ere funeral was the *beateree*. They had got a young woman over there from a j'inin' town to sing. There was an old pianer in the room, and as soon as the singer entered where the mourners were seated, the sexton called out in a loud tone: 'Do you want that 'ere pianer opened? 'Cause, if you do, I have got to take off all them ere *jigermaries* that is on top on't, and put 'um on the floor, for the corpse is on the only table there is.'

"The singer was a very pooty appearin' young woman, an' she said she would try to pitch the tune without the pianer. She done very well, and all them that could sing j'ined in. The mourners bore up remarkable, considerin' all they had to go through with. When the services was over, the sexton called out: 'The funeral cortage will now proceed to the place of burial. The friends can take leave of the corpse as they pass out, and all them that want to can foller the hearse to the yard.' One old man said, as he passed the remains: 'I declare, she

looks more natural than she did when she was alive.'"

In these days, when kerosene takes so large a place in the illumination of the world, there is danger that the tallow dips of our grandmothers will be forgotten. Candle-making was the great housekeeping event of the fall of the year, as soap-making was in the spring. The light and cheer of the long winter evenings in every home in Brampton depended upon the candles which the frugal housewives made from the tallow of their own animals, and stored away in boxes for the use of the family through the year. Oh, what a day it was for the children when the great brass kettle was brought out and hung upon the crane in the huge fireplace, where the immense logs were crackling and the blaze ascending through a chimney as large as some modern rooms.


The kettle was first partly filled with water, and when this was heated the cakes of tallow were broken up and thrown in to melt and float upon the top. It was an undecided question in

Brampton, and one that greatly agitated the minds of the good housewives, whether beeswax or bayberry tallow would be added to give hardness and consistency to the candles. Mrs. Gibbs said that in Berrytown they preferred bayberry, but Mis' Jones was of the opinion that beeswax would give the candles a better color and make them spend better and prevent their running. I think the question was never settled to the entire satisfaction of Mis' Jones and Mis' Howe.

Before the dawn of day the whole family were astir. The great fire was lighted, the frugal breakfast eaten, and the children all on the *qui vive*. The wicks had been cut the evening before, dipped in saltpetre and twisted over wooden rods which were kept from year to year tied up in bunches and laid up above the great beams in the kitchen for use. These rods were hung on two poles supported by chairs, and were few or many in number according to the supply of candles to be made. Each rod held eight or ten wicks three or four inches apart.

The kettle was taken from the crane and set down near the poles. Now all was ready. Mis' Jones, with her blue-checked apron covering her scant linsey-woolsey gown, took her seat on a flag-bottomed high-backed chair in the middle of the rods, and commenced operations with an expression of supreme satisfaction. Beginning with the rod at her right hand, she dipped it deftly into the kettle, watching carefully to see that every wick hung straight and clear of every other, and thus went down the line. By the time the last rod was reached, the first one was cool and ready for another immersion.

This process was repeated until the slow-growing candles had attained the proper size, the kettle meanwhile being replenished with boiling water and freshly melted tallow. There were always several rods toward the end of the poles filled with tiny candles to be given to the children as rewards of merit. When they were especially good they had a little candle to light the way to their small trundle-beds, and as long as it lasted they could tell stories of ghosts and



witches, or repeat the tales of Bluebeard and Red Riding Hood, without fear.

Aunt Puah used to say that the children raly lotted on the little candles in the fall of the year, and you could hire 'em to do a'most anything if you promised 'em one. Mis' Smith always knew when Mis' Jones was dippin' and would run in several times in the course of the day to see how she was gettin' on.

"Do stop, Mis' Jones, long enough to take a pinch of snuff; 'twill rest you and do you good."

Mis' Jones said she begrutched every minute she stopped, the taller cooled so fast, but she felt well paid for her work, the candles seemed to be comin' out so complete.

It took a whole day to finish the candles, and then they were left undisturbed until the next morning, when they were taken from the rods, packed away, hard and white, ready for use.

Who that has witnessed a corn-husking in the full moon of an October night can ever forget

the merry-making among the young people as they gathered around the mountains of un-husked corn, on the floor of a spacious New England barn, to unwrap the treasure from its soft envelope, and place it in piles ready for the winter's use? The elderly people told the story of their past loves, while they husked the golden grain, and the younger people talked of their future plans and prospective loves, and played "hide-and-seek" around the sweet-smelling hay-mows, and, as the evening drew to a close, made the rafters echo with the music of a corn-stalk violin to the merry tunes of "Money Musk," "Fisher's Hornpipe," and "We won't go home till mornin'." Then were served the "foaming flip" and the sweet cider, with piles of doughnuts and sheets of gingerbread, and pumpkin pies; shy, pleasant words were whispered among the lads and lassies, and friendly good-nights among their elders, and the moon shone into the low chamber windows of the simple homes of Brampton, and found every man and woman, at nine



o'clock, in the peaceful sleep of the tired and  
honest laborer.

Through Brampton's woods the west wind sighs,  
The fields are red with clover;  
The sweet-fern grows, the blackberry blows,  
The rocky pastures over.  
Its hill still looks to mount and sea;  
Its springs still feed the river;  
But the early days and the simple ways  
Alike have fled forever.

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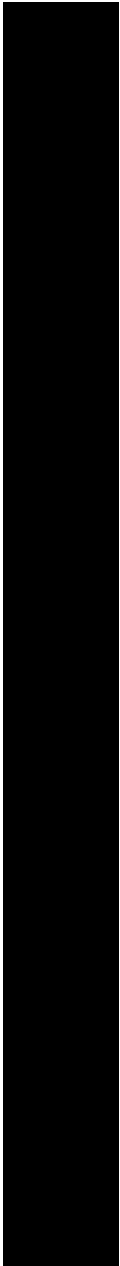
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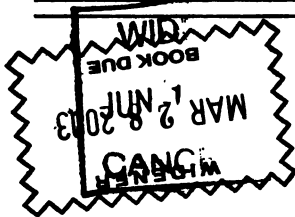




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